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By Jonathan Rowe

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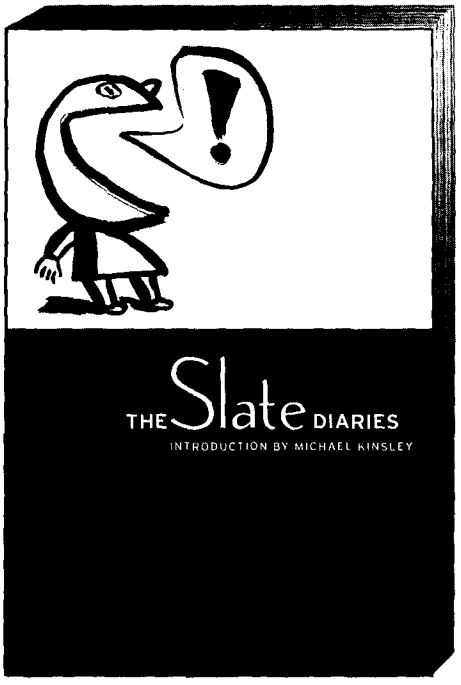


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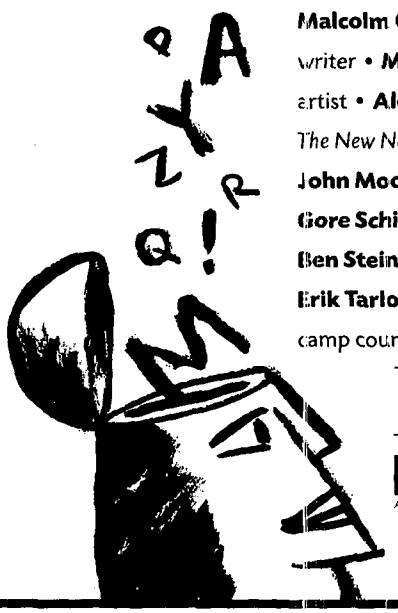

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# Contents

Volume 32, Number [illegible]

## Features


**4** TILTING AT WINDMILLS
Botox In Botswana ... Wise Choices In West Virginia ... Gays For The Draft! ... Gender-Bending Eels ... Naughty Lawyers ... Nervous Pitchers.
BY CHARLES PETERS

**10** **The Ghost Of Tom Joad**
What happens when an entire generation forgets what it means to be poor
BY LYNDA MCDONNELL

**17** **Help Wanted**
Why welfare reform needs good social workers
BY ALEXANDER NGUYEN

**21** **Don't Mean A Thing**
Why your vote doesn't count unless you live in Kalamazoo or Morgantown
BY JAMES P. ROONEY

**25** **Contempt Of Court**
How Jesse Helms and the State Department are helping future Milosevics escape justice
BY JONATHAN TEPPERMAN

**29** **Finding The Civil Service's Hidden Sex Appeal**
Why the brightest young people shy away from government
BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

**Cover Story**

**35** **Reach Out And Annoy Someone**
When public space turns private, we're all stuck listening to the noise
BY JONATHAN ROWE

**38** **Reinventing The Wheel**
Transition lessons for the president elect
BY JOE DEMPSEY

**45** **Clintonese**
Clinton's new language for the presidency
BY MICKEY KAUS


## Political Booknotes


**49** **Bread Or Bullets**
JACOB HEILBRUNN reviews DAVID ABERNETHY'S *The Dynamics of Global Dominance* and ROBERT D. KAPLAN'S *Eastward To Tartary*

**The Preacher**
BEN SOSKIS reviews STEPHEN L. CARTER'S *God's Name In Vain*

**Against The Grain**
ROBERT WEISSMAN reviews KURT EICHENWALD'S *The Informant*

**Today And Tomorrow Abroad**
STEVE KETTMANN reviews TIMOTHY GARTON ASH'S *History of the Present*

**Exile Blues**
SUSAN BUZZELLI reviews ALEXANDER STEPHAN'S *Communazis*

**Cosmic Minutia**
CHRISTINA LARSON reviews PHILIP HAMBURGER'S *Matters of State*

**The Grateful Fed**
MERRILL GOOZNER reviews JUSTIN MARTIN'S *Greenspan*


## Departments


**2** Letters
**15** Monthly Journalism Award
**34** Memo of the Month
**40** Who's Who
**48** Tidbits & Outrages


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# Letters

## Everyone's State

The letter from Allen Clobridge (September 2000) misses a very important point. Even though all of the nation's voters may have an interest in the outcome of elections in West Virginia, senators and representatives from that state are still constitutionally charged with representing the interests of West Virginia voters. Where these are in conflict with the interests of residents in other states, West Virginians should be confident that their interests will prevail. This may not be the case if their elected representatives are elected with out-of-state money.

Yes, this will occasionally lead to parochialism, but cross-state influence buying by the wealthy hardly seems to offer a solution. (The logical extension of Mr. Clobridge's argument, and one with fewer negative side effects, would be to allow us all to vote in every state.) The solution to parochialism is not to create conflicting loyalties in our elected representatives, but to elect representatives with vision and enough character to act as leaders.

BILL FENTON
*Alexandria, Va.*

## Flushed Out

I noticed your short blurb last issue on the virtues of dual flush toilets as a means of saving water. Unfortunately, one of the many disadvantages to the federal 1.6 gallon per flush (GPF) standard is that it essentially precludes such alternatives. If the higher of the two flushes in such toilets exceeds 1.6 GPF, then it doesn't matter that the low flush choice is below 1.6—the toilet is illegal.

One additional point I could have made in my October 1998 article for you on toilets is that federal one-size-fits-all mandates frequently close the door to better ways of addressing the problem to be solved. Indeed, these two-flush toilets were just beginning to catch on in areas of the U.S. with high water rates, but not anymore.

By the way, the next such regulation in the works is a tough new efficiency standard for washing machines, which will make pricey front loaders the dominant and perhaps the only type available before the end of the decade.

BEN LIEBERMAN
*Washington, DC*

## False START

There is a significant error in your description of the possibility of cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal should George W. Bush become president. For the last several years, Congress specifically prohibited any reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal until Russia ratified START II, the nuclear reductions treaty.

However, this year, after Russia ratified START II (with some conditions that mean it will not enter into force anytime soon), Congress graciously modified the restriction. They now stipulated that cuts could only happen *after* a comprehensive (and lengthy) defense policy review is done. The presumption among Republicans was that the *next* president might be allowed to make such cuts. The current inhabitant of the Oval Office, leaving office fairly soon, was not to be trusted with that option.

Now, as to whether Bush will actually take up his bold pledge, and follow in the footsteps of his father, who courageously and correctly sharply reduced U.S. short-range nuclear arsenals after the end of the Cold War, that is an open question.

STEPHEN YOUNG
*Washington, DC*

## Good With Numbers

I just read with keen interest your article/report on *U.S. News'* collegiate ranking system, and I want to thank you for having an objective, fair-minded view that points out flaws with all parties concerned. Too often these days, society forces us to choose between two sides of an argument and does not let us recognize positive features of each position. Your article exemplifies this aspect. In addition, negative opinions are too often focused upon more than positive aspects. You focused on all points, good and bad, of *U.S. News*, the universities, and the public.

It dismays me that non-academics were selected to produce the original rankings, thereby continuing the alarming trend that education is something everyone knows about and is not difficult to understand. Teaching is an art that requires as intensive a study as any other discipline. When non-education oriented people are put in charge of surveying education, the "treat it like a business" methodology can have many adverse effects. What dismayed me further was the justification that Elfin et. al. pronounced that the Ivies and Stanford should be at the top, and that they purposely jiggled the numbers to support their subjectivity. With this in mind, the meritocracy is preserved at the expense of other more deserving institutions.

Please accept my thanks for objective journalism; it's all too rare these days.

COLIN MASON
*Belton, Texas*

## All That Glitters...

I would like to correct some of the misleading statements in the article, "Loosening the Golden Handcuffs," which appeared in the July/August edition of *The Washington Monthly*.

The author states that the U.S. Federal Reserve owns more than 8,000 tons of gold. Not true. While the New York Federal Reserve does serve as a custodian and stores gold for foreign nations, the Reserve does not own any gold. Not one ounce. Furthermore, gold is not used by the Federal Reserve to intervene in foreign exchange or commodity markets. Sole responsibility for America's gold reserve lies in the hands of the Treasury Department.

The article suggests that the gold industry is reckless in its use of cyanide. Not so. The use of cyanide and cyanide-bearing solutions at precious metal mining operations is strictly regulated by U.S. federal and state environmental laws pertaining to air and water quality, waste management, and land use. Cyanide is the safest chemical reagent to extract gold from rock and has been safely used in precious metal extraction since 1887. In the many decades of its use in the U.S. there have been no work-related fatalities due to cyanide use and there have been no reports of off-site


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human health impacts.

The issue of abandoned mines is indeed a problem and one that today's U.S. gold industry is addressing through a comprehensive plan. Even though most of these mines were abandoned generations ago, today's mining industry has been at the forefront in an effort to clean up those mines. To that end, the U.S. mining industry developed the Abandoned Mine Land Inititative, a project to report annually the number of high-priority sites and to identify, measure, and report on the progress of clean-up programs.

The initiative will also create a mechanism to identify and remove legislative and/or regulatory obstacles to such clean up and provide incentive for abandoned mine clean up. The overall goal of the initiative is to increase public and private investment in remediation, consolidating financial resources and technological expertise to promote on-the-ground clean up.

Your readers may also be interested in knowing that before any state allows mining to begin, the mining company must submit detailed plans for mining operations, as well as how the company will "reclaim" the site after mining has ended. In addition to having its plans approved, the company must post bonds to cover the likely cost of the reclamation—often millions of dollars for each mine operation. Thus, proper reclamation of restoration of land is assured before mining begins.

The gold industry's commitment to environmental stewardship is centered on land reclamation, which involves recontouring and revegetating lands, restoring old wetlands or creating new ones, and often includes specific new uses for the land—as parks, wildlife habitats, and environmental study centers. Further, many mining companies have won awards from noted environmental organizations, including the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Council, National Wildlife Federation, Trout Limited, and the Pacific Northwest Pollution Control Association.

Last, among his many arguments for the world to discontinue private and public investment in gold, the author states that "selling our gold reserves is fiscally sound." This argument runs counter to the conclusions of perhaps the world's leading authority on the subject, Professor Robert Mundell of Columbia University, recipient of last year's Nobel Prize for economics. "Gold provides a stabilizing effect in a world of entirely flexible currencies," he has noted. "Countries will simply not risk just holding paper currencies, especially if there is any change in the international monetary system."

PAUL BATEMAN
PRESIDENT,
*The Gold Institute*
*Washington, DC*

## Credit Where Credit's Due

I have just read your interesting article "Greenspan? Gipper? Gates?" in the June issue of *The Washington Monthly*.

There is a point mentioned in passing on the last page, "Ronald Reagan oversaw the demise of the Soviet threat..." that implicitly credits Reagan at least in part with forcing the Soviet Union into its dissolution. This is indeed a common opinion, but I believe it is an error.

The reason is that back in about 1970, I remember a brief article in the *London Daily Telegraph* that remarked that at the present rate of increase in the size of the Soviet Civil Service, it would absorb the entire population within 20 years.

Of course that could not happen. But it makes the point that the Russians were trying to do something for which they had not the resources and never could have the resources, and therefore were headed for administrative collapse within (perhaps) 20 years. All the public actions of Reagan and Gorbachev merely lent a particular style and color of the events.

RODERICK REES
*Woodinville, Wa.*

### Corrections

*In the October 2000 article, "Flying Too High," the AOPA was misidentified. AOPA is the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association.*

*Also in that issue, the editor of* Godfather of The Kremlin *was misidentified as a co-author.*


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Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. Send correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies, and address changes to 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009. For address changes, provide six weeks' notice and include old address label. Send subscription complaints to Charles Peters, *The Washington Monthly*, 1611 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009. *The Washington Monthly* is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. For reprint rights call Tara Mansbridge at (202) 462-0128. Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly Co., 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Printed in U.S.A.


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ISSN 0043-0633. Postmaster: Send change of address to *The Washington Monthly*, 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and at additional mailing offices. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Send manuscripts and letters to: Editors, 1611 Connecticut Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20009 or e-mail to:
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# Tilting at Windmills

By Charles Peters

*Botox In Botswana • Wise Choices In West Virginia • Gays For The Draft!*

*Gender-Bending Eels •Naughty Lawyers • Nervous Pitchers*

I'M SURE ONE REASON THAT THE rich always think they have to get richer is that the world continues to offer such tantalizing opportunities to spend more money. For example, there's a new service for those who want to get their faces lifted and their tummies tucked but who worry about peeping friends, neighbors, and business associates. Orient-Express Hotels and an organization called Surgeon & Safari offer the services of a renowned plastic surgeon in Johannesburg, South Africa combined with a recuperation package featuring "pampering health and beauty treatment," amid the "opulent surroundings" of luxury hotels providing a "discreet layout and sense of privacy." Guests have "the option of embarking on an exciting safari following their treatment at Orient Express' Gametrackers camps in Botswana." A 14-day package includes "procedures such as eyelid surgery, full-face laser resurfacing, liposuction, and breast lifts."

••••••••

NORMALLY, WHEN PRESIDENTIAL campaigns come down to the wire, I can rest assured that my home state will vote Democratic, since West Virginia rarely votes for Republican presidential candidates. Indeed, it has only done so three times in 80 years and each of those times was part of a national landslide to re-elect a Republican incumbent. But this year, it seems that George W. Bush has a chance of changing that record. If he succeeds, Bush would be the first Republican presidential candidate that West Virginia has supported for a first term in all those years. The reason is that Gore's pro-environment record makes him suspect not only to mine owners but to mine workers as well. The same is true of the chemical industry. And the steel industry doesn't like his advocacy of free trade.

According to the most recent poll in the *Charleston Gazette*, he trails Bush by a margin of 39 to 37 percent. Bush may also help re-elect Republican governor Cecil H. Underwood, who is running against the veteran liberal congressman Bob Wise. This is unfortunate because Underwood's lifetime of devotion to the interests of large corporations should not be rewarded. I hope my friends back home will realize before it's too late that whatever their deficiencies, Gore and Wise are the better choices.

**A 14-day package in Botswana includes procedures such as eyelid surgery and breast lifts.**

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GAYS SHOULD SUPPORT A draft, says my friend Charles Moskos, a professor at Northwestern and an authority on military manpower issues. Here's his argument: Because of the military's prohibition against self-proclaimed gays, a draft would inspire those who didn't want to serve to claim they're gay. So many people would try to use this avenue of escape that the military would have to say, "That's no excuse, we accept gays." I love it!

••••••••

ONE OF THE MOST SACRED TENETS of George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism is that "no child should be left behind." But if you look at Bush's record on health care for kids, you realize that a lot of Texas children are being left behind because they're too sick to keep up. 734,000 Texas children have no health insurance. One reason Bush was able to cut Texas taxes by $2.7 billion was because he underfunded Medicaid. Of all Texas children who are eligible for Medicaid, 40 percent do not receive it.

••••••••

THE MEDIA'S approach to George W. Bush's misrepresentations, as opposed to those of Al Gore, has been notably sotto voce, even though it seems to me that Bush's have been a good deal more substantial than Gore's. After the third debate, however, *The New York Times*' Jim Yardley and *The Washington Post*'s Glenn Kessler did nail the highly misleading statements Bush made about his support for a Texas patients' bill of rights and a bill allowing women direct access to the ob/gyn of their choice. "The reforms happened despite him, not because of him," the reporters were told. Still, both the *Times* and the *Post* buried their stories on inside pages.

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ANOTHER ITEM FROM CHARLIE Moskos. Earlier this year, he surveyed 430 Northwestern undergraduates on their attitudes toward military service. The results showed little enthusiasm for joining up. Then Charlie gave a five minute talk in which he described his own experience as a draftee in Germany during the 1950s, and his experience studying peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Haiti, and



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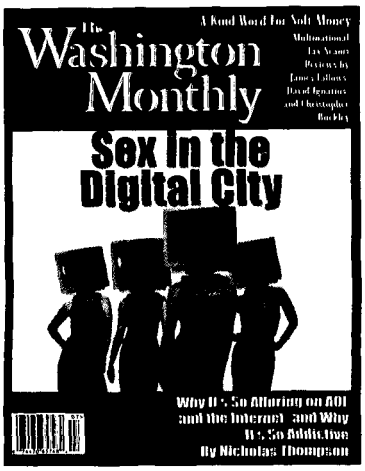


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Bosnia:

"I sought to be as candid as I could by noting the potential dangers as well as the physical demands and regimentation of military service. But I also mentioned the fun and laughter in the company of a cross-section of Americans I would otherwise never have met. I described peacekeeping as an ennobling experience and the chance to march with history. I concluded by saying that doing something so different for a year or two was the best way to refresh oneself before going on to graduate school or a career."

After his short talk, Charlie took a second survey. This time "the propensity to enlist doubled for the two-year option and trebled for the 15-month one."

Nicholas Thompson makes a similar point in his article about why young people aren't attracted to government service. They simply don't know how interesting and fulfilling it can be.

In my own life, going from private practice of law to work in the West Virginia legislature came close to being a night and day experience. Half of my law practice work was boring, half of it was in service of dubious clients. At the legislature, the work was fascinating and I was working full time in the public interest. Later when I worked on the Peace Corps staff and my job was trying to identify what we were doing right and wrong and trying to figure out how to replicate the good while avoiding the bad, I felt that all my talents were fully used in the service of a cause I believed in.

I have never felt so good about my life. Here at the magazine the editorial side of my work has been equally satisfying, but I also have to devote a large amount of my time to the business side where my confidence in my ability and my enjoyment is considerably less. In the government, one of the nice things is that you only have to worry about money once a year, when your agency budget is determined by your boss, the OMB, and Congress. That can be harrowing, but the process itself usually consumes only a few weeks of your time.

**I can easily imagine Gore, Lieberman, or Cheney as president. Who does that leave out?**

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SOMETHING ELSE I loved is David von Drehle's description in *The Washington Post* of the site of the vice-presidential debate:

"Centre College hosted the debate. This unlikely setting—far from the nearest airport, in a place without many four-lane roads, in fact—turned out to be one of the best ever. The whole day was a happy pageant of Norman Rockwell meets Alexis de Tocqueville.

"Tired and jaded political junkies stepped from their cars and buses into an afternoon that was either the very end of summer or the very beginning of fall. Though the trees still appeared to be green, a few golden leaves began to drift toward the grass of the college common as evening approached.

"On the common, bands played marches and choirs sang gospel hymns. Hours before the debate began, the gentle sloping ground filled with grandparents on lawn chairs and moms and dads on blankets and children who twirled and ran and tumbled and plucked leaves from their hair.

"Speakers read passages from great documents of American history—the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address—and an orchestra played the National Anthem and My Old Kentucky Home. Kids waved flags."

My mother's family is from Kentucky and my favorite uncle on her side taught me to regard Centre College's 6-0 victory over Harvard in a 1920s football game as the most significant athletic event of the era.

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD have the right to prune its dead wood by firing incompetent and marginal employees. Two developments offer some hope for progress. First, GAO Comptroller General David M. Walker is trying to get Congress to give him the authority to include skill and performance, not just seniority in determining who gets laid off. Second, Mayor Anthony Williams, has persuaded 930 of the District of Columbia 1,163 middle managers to surrender their protection against firing in return for a 10 to 12 percent raise in pay. It's a great bargain for the city of Washington which has been saddled, largely through the efforts of Marion Barry, with far too many inept civil servants. You won't be surprised to learn that the main opposition to Williams' reform has come from the government employees' unions.

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ASIAN EELS ARE SOMETHING ELSE we have to worry about. They are a recent import, just like the West Nile Virus. The Asian eel can live for months without food or water. It can survive on land as well as in salt or fresh water. It can lay up to 1,000 eggs at a time. It breeds year round, and if a male eel happens to find himself with only other guys around, he can turn himself into a girl eel for breeding.

Mark Robichaux of *The Wall Street Journal* points out that in addition to the Asian eel, we're threatened by Fomosan termites, Latin American swamp rats, and Asian long-horned beetles. Russian zebra mussels now cause $5 billion in damage in the Great Lakes and foreign weeds and plants are



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expanding their range in the U.S. at the rate of 4,600 acres a day.

And, as you no doubt recall, the great scourge of AIDS came out of Africa and, some researchers suspect, was first spread to the United States by an infected steward on an international airline. Indeed, it does seem that the main source of infection from foreign disease comes from insects and infected passengers carried by the international airlines. The exotic plants and creatures often arrive in the cargo and ballast of freighters.

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IN THE GLOBALIZATION of disease we're not only a victim but a perpetrator. It seems AIDS has spread to Mexico from the U.S.A. "The migrant workers leave their Mexican villages with hope of sending home fat money orders," writes Jennifer Mena of the *Los Angeles Times*, "but some are returning with a deadly U.S. import, the AIDS virus." Mexican officials estimate that 30 percent of the country's AIDS patients got the virus here and brought it back to Mexico where they infected others.

Globalization has had other bad effects, among them, increasing pollution and child labor in the Third World. Do we have to passively resign ourselves to all these evils? Or shouldn't they be seen as a major challenge to smart people everywhere, with Nobel Prizes going to those who figure out the best ways to deal with the downsides of globalization?

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MY QUESTION ABOUT HOW Ebbets Field got its name attracted more letters than any other "Tilting" item this year. Thanks to all of you who wrote. Your interest encourages me to reminisce about the Brooklyn Dodgers.

One memory concerns a game that took place in August 1947. This was Jackie Robinson's first season. The Dodgers were playing their great rivals, the St. Louis Cardinals. The Cardinals defeated the Dodgers in a close pennant race in 1946 and were the dominant team in baseball having won three world series in the last five years, trouncing Joe DiMaggio's Yankees in 1942 and edging out Ted Williams' Red Sox in the '46 series.

Needless to say they were the team most feared by Dodgers fans. The hitter they most feared was Cardinal Hall of Famer Stan Musial. Musial was a left-handed batter who was accustomed to rattling line drives off Ebbets Field's close-in right field fence when he wasn't hitting the ball over it. When he came to bat, a deeply apprehensive silence settled over Ebbets Field.

But that day Musial wasn't the star. It was Jackie who was doing the rattling. What he rattled wasn't the wall but the Cardinal pitcher whose nerves were frayed by Robinson's constant threat to steal whenever he got on base—which was often. As Robinson edged off the base, the noise from the excited crowd would disconcert the pitcher even more. The result was bad pitches that the Dodgers turned into walks, hits, and runs.

The Dodgers won that day and you had the feeling that from now on they were going to be the team to beat in the National League—and indeed they were. In the next decade, they won six National League championships.

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CONGRESS RECENTLY REJECTED Chief Justice William Rehnquist's plea that he and his brethren be allowed to moonlight making paid speeches. We now pay the Chief Justice $181,400 and associate justices $173,600. That's not bad, especially considering that they get July, August, and September off and are often invited to expense-paid conferences held at enticing vacation resorts around the globe. And while they're working, the load is not too heavy. "Where else," asks *The Washington Post*'s Al Kamen, "can people decide on their own to cut their workload in half—from around 140-150 decided cases a few years ago to about 75 in recent years—and they whine that they are underpaid? Is someone forcing them to stay on the court?" Supreme Court justices have one of the world's best jobs, with a chance to have impact on major political issues, life time tenure, complete independence. If Bill Clinton is interested, I'm available. I'll even take a cut in pay.

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JAMES PERRY, A VETERAN POLITICAL reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, recently noted that telling lies is part and parcel of presidential politics. One example he cited comes from Lyndon Johnson, who told American troops that his great-great grandfather died at the Alamo. The man actually died peacefully in his bed. Years later, when Doris Kearns Goodwin asked Johnson why he had lied, Johnson said, "God damn it, why must all those journalists be such sticklers for detail?" And then he told her that his grandfather had died at the Battle of San Jacinto, which wasn't true either.

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MY OTHER MEMORY OF EBBETS Field involves a game on a Sunday afternoon—or maybe Labor Day-in early September 1951. The New York Giants and the Dodgers were locked in one of the great pennant races of the era, the one that ended with Bobby Thomson's famous home run. I was dating a young woman from Brooklyn whose father was not only hot-tempered, but highly, and rightly, suspicious of my intentions toward his daughter. The only thing he and I had in common was baseball.

On this particular afternoon, he had gone to the beach and his daughter and I had the apartment to ourselves. We watched the Giants and the Dodgers on the living room television for a few innings, but mutual affection soon



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led us into her bedroom. The situation was developing along natural lines when suddenly we heard the front door open and someone walk in. She whispered, "Oh my God, it's my father."

This presented several problems, not in the least of which was how we were going to get from the bedroom to the living room unobserved. There was a clear view from the front door down to the hallway that we would have to cross, so it was not going to be easy. We were given a moment's reprieve when we heard the father go into the kitchen. In that moment, she slipped into her dress and rushed down the hall to greet him and keep him in the kitchen so I could put on my pants and sneak into the living room.

By the time he entered the room, I was sitting before the television set absorbed in the game. He greeted me and sat down to watch, but I sensed that I was not yet out of the woods. For one thing, I had not managed to get my shoes on. His daughter's disheveled aspect, which I probably shared, might also have aroused suspicion. But when the father complained that he had missed the last inning coming from the beach, I saw an opportunity to lay his suspicions to rest. I immediately launched into: "With the Giants leading two to nothing and one out, Snider doubled off Maglie, then Robinson tripled, scoring Snider, but with Robinson on third, Pafko hit a scorcher down the third base line. Thomson grabbed it, tagged Robinson, and threw to Lockman at first for a double play."

Although he was disappointed that the Dodgers had blown an opportunity to tie the score, he was obviously reassured that I had been attending closely to the game. This feeling, unfortunately, was not shared by his daughter, who realized that I had been listening while we were in bed. She refused to be comforted by my involved explanation of how the human mind can operate on two levels. This item originally appeared in my autobiography, *Tilting at Windmills*, published by Addison-Wesley in 1988.

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"LET'S SAY YOU BOUGHT A PIECE of property for $3,000, only then you find out that the guy who sold it to you paid $1,000 for it after you agreed to buy it. Then, to rub salt in the wound, you hear that his lawyer and your lawyer are, in fact, the same guy."

The situation, described by Carl Spivak and Dan Bice of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reminds me of similar ethically marginal behavior that I encountered when I was practicing law. What actually happened here is that Jeffrey Roethe, the city attorney for Edgarton, Wisconsin, also represented Jeffrey Schultz, a developer.

Schultz sold the city 100 acres of land at $3,000 an acre. City attorney Roethe advised the city council that it was the best deal it could get from Schultz—"a bottom-line offer." Roethe did not tell the city that he was at that moment representing Schultz in acquiring the land for $1,000 an acre. Has Roethe's law license been revoked or at least suspended for this transgression? Of course not. According to Bice and Spivak, the Board of Attorneys Professional Responsibility merely told the lawyer "that he was being naughty and ought not do it again."

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IF YOU'RE AS BIG A FAN OF "THE West Wing" as I am, you'll be pleased to hear that after attracting an average of 13 million viewers last year, the opening episode this October was watched by 25 million people. The show could go a long way toward ending the cynicism about government that has dominated recent times. People who have assumed all politicians are corrupt and all bureaucrats are self-protective time-servers are now seeing a government populated by able and dedicated public servants. Even for those of us who have been around Washington for a while, the show is credible. You've known people like these. Not all public servants are like them. A lot aren't. But—and this is important to understand—a lot are.

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BY THE WAY, I THINK AL GORE is one of the good guys. Like some of the characters in "The West Wing," he has his quirks. But he's a truly decent and intelligent public servant. And I pray his embarrassing quirks will not sink him, as they threatened to do after the first debate. Although the polls show that most voters thought he had won the debate, the press immediately began to make fun of the sighs and exaggerations, and the school marmish manner. Then Gore's standing in the polls began to decline.

The media tilt toward Bush, which had been pronounced in the year before the conventions briefly turned in Gore's favor in late August and early September but after the first debate, it swung back to Bush. The situation has not been helped by the nation's most influential paper, *The New York Times*. According to an article by Howard Kurtz, the media critic of *The Washington Post*, since the conventions, the *Times*' front page "carried nine anti-Gore articles and six anti-Bush; 12 pro-Gore articles and 21 pro-Bush."

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ONE STAND GORE HAS TAKEN that has been unfairly criticized, even by liberals, has been his advocacy of the sale of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to halt the further escalation of oil prices. As regular readers know, the *Monthly* has long championed such use of the Reserve. There is not a true free market in oil. OPEC has a monopoly. If you



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don't believe in monopoly pricing then we must have a way to counter OPEC's power, especially when that power threatens to destabilize the world economy. Incidentally, Paul Krugman, the new economics columnist for *The New York Times* shares this view.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT NEITHER Bridgestone, Firestone, nor Ford officials can be criminally indicted for the recent scandals involving Ford Explorers and Firestone tires? "The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration," writes Cindy Skrzycki of *The Washington Post*, "has no criminal provisions written into its statute—except for odometer fraud." Similar agencies like the EPA, OSHA, the FDA, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have the authority to initiate criminal prosecutions of violations of law. The NHTSA should be given the same power. Now they can punish the sleazy used car salesman who fiddles with the mileage but not the makers of products that kill human beings.

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WHITE HOUSE SLEEPOVERS BY campaign contributions are in the news again. This time the charge is that Hillary Clinton's donors were rewarded by an invitation to stay overnight at the White House.

The tremendous hullabaloo about this matter reflects a terrible failure of empathy by the media. If reporters had ever been elected to public office they would understand the point I have tried so hard to make in this column: Whenever an elected official can find a way to reward his contributors that does not involve selling out to them on a public issue, he should get down on his knees and thank the Lord.

Innocent favors, like having them as a guest in your home or accepting an invitation from them, are what makes good government possible. They relieve you of the obligation to do the donor's bidding when it comes to taking a stand on an issue where your allegiance should belong solely to the public interest.

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ALTHOUGH I AM FOR GORE AND Lieberman, there is a question I have about each of them. Why does Lieberman have so little confidence in Gore's ability to win that he refuses to risk giving up his Senate seat now in order to permit a Democrat to succeed him instead of the Republican who will surely be appointed by the Republican governor of Connecticut? Why doesn't Gore ask Bill Clinton to campaign for him? Clinton is much more effective on the stump than the vice president is; his case for Gore would be more persuasive than Gore's own. Gore should know that Richard Nixon made a similar mistake in 1960 in not calling on Eisenhower to campaign until it was too late. Even then Eisenhower's help gave Nixon a last minute surge that brought him within 100,000 votes of victory.

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ADD MY VOICE TO THE MANY who felt that the Cheney-Lieberman debate set the standard for tone, if not content for political discourse that we hope will be emulated by all politicians. You can easily imagine Cheney or Lieberman as president. The same is true, despite his faults, of Gore. Who does that leave out?

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THE MEDIA'S TENDENCY TO exaggerate Al Gore's exaggerations as Robert Parry described in our April issue, after abating for a while, exploded in the wake of the first debate. If you don't believe it, just look at the coverage of Gore's mention, during the first debate, of a Florida high school student Kailey Ellis, who had to stand through class because her classroom didn't have room for enough desks for all the students.

*The Wall Street Journal* promptly published a letter from Ellis' school principal denying that his students had to stand through class. The Bush campaign seized on the letter and used it to bash Gore again as a liar—a charge the press eagerly amplified. But a few days later, Ellis' father, a Republican, came forward to defend Gore, proving that in fact, his daughter frequently had to stand through class. Ellis, a 10th grader at Sarasota High School, was photographed in a local paper standing in room with 35 other pupils in a classroom designed for 24. In other words, Gore was telling what was essentially the truth about an overcrowded class.

Similarly, his statement that he was with James Lee Witt on a disaster relief mission through Texas, for which he was widely berated, told an essential truth. One of the triumphs of Gore's Reinventing Government effort has been the dramatic improvement of FEMA, which was a joke under George Bush but which has become an outstanding agency under Witt. And it is also true that Gore accompanied Witt on many relief missions. So Gore was only slightly misrepresenting a true story he had every reason to be proud of.

Why does the media harp on this issue? Because it's simple and it's easy to make fun of—a lot easier say, than doing the research and analysis to determine whether Bush or Gore is right about child health care.

I don't think the press is anti-Gore. If Bush had mangled some words in the first debate, that too, would have been featured on "Saturday Night Live" and the talk shows. The problem is not bias, it's intellectual shiftlessness—paying too little attention to the major but sometimes complex issues of the campaign and far too much attention to matters that are minor but easily susceptible to ridicule and to clever one liners that get journalists booked on the talk shows.

The unfortunate result of all this is that Gore's credibility rating in the polls has plummeted. If Bush wins this could be the first election decided by the press and the irony is that I'm sure most reporters will finally cast their own votes for Gore. ●



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# The Ghost of Tom Joad

*What happens when an entire generation forgets what it means to be poor?*

BY LYNDA MCDONNELL

A FRIEND WHO TEACHES COLLEGE ART history complains bitingly about her students' ignorance of the Bible. How can aspiring artists understand Renaissance art—Michelangelo's "David" or Raphael's Virgin Mary—without knowing the major prophets, saints, and martyrs?

Her complaint is not about the students' lack of religious fervor, but their cultural illiteracy. Schooled in neither church nor classroom in the Judeo-Christian stories that still shape our culture, they take refuge in ignorance: Why do we have to learn this stuff? We're here to paint, they say.

I thought of my friend's complaint while watching the Democrats in Los Angeles this summer. Challenging George W. Bush's vague but ardent claim of conservative compassion, President Clinton traced his party's legacy of compassion from FDR to LBJ to Jimmy Carter, who's still pounding nails into Habitat for Humanity homes.

While Clinton's speech was a substantive response to Bush's, I suspected that Clinton's homage to Johnson and Roosevelt held as little meaning for much of Clinton's audience as my friend's allusions to St. Paul held for her art students. The reason? Much of Clinton's audience no longer has any understanding of poverty—whether working with the poor, being poor, or even sharing a bus seat with someone poor.

Nearly half the country is younger than 35, and the percentage of Americans who can remember Black Friday or the War on Poverty is on the decline. Those coming up behind them view poverty through a very different lens—if they view it at all. Not only have today's young adults come of age during an unprecedented time of peace and prosperity, their social history has largely been informed by such leaders as Ronald Reagan and Jesse Ventura, not Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy. And, as America's class segregation has sharpened over the past 20 years, today's newest generation of affluent adults has had very little opportunity to fully appreciate their good fortune.

This shift in perspective is already having an impact on national politics; even the Democrats understand that talk of noble causes like ending hunger or combating illiteracy does little to rally the voters. During the first presidential debate, the only mention of poverty from either candidate came when Al Gore suggested that welfare reform should be extended to the fathers of poor children.

You could say that the disappearance of poverty from national politics is merely the product of a prosperity-induced callousness or the stupor of affluence, but I suspect the reason is more complicated than that. Call it national amnesia.

## Life Lessons

Last year, I taught a seminar on poverty to a dozen college freshmen at the University of Minnesota. Early in the semester, when I asked what they knew of the Great Depression, a lone student raised his hand. Jobs were kind of hard to get, he'd heard. Unemployment was high.

Having been reared on family stories of lard sandwiches, failed businesses, and families doubling up because of lost jobs, I was amazed. Then I did a little subtraction: For these students, the Great Depression was nearly as remote in time as President McKinley and the Spanish-American War were to me at their age.

Their grandparents might have been children during the Depression, but they didn't talk about it.

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Perhaps, like my sons' grandparents, they live far away and want to spend their limited family time spoiling their grandchildren with miniature golf and ice cream, not recounting hard times. High school history these days does a poor job of filling in the gaps. Jay Leno recently demonstrated that the average schmo doesn't have a clue who those guys carved on Mt. Rushmore might be. Even Harvard grads are a bit vague about the details.

My students, all white, from small towns and suburbs in the Midwest, had concern, or at least curiosity, about poverty. They just didn't know much. Some were simply baffled. The nation's been on an economic roll since they were in fourth grade. Minnesota's unemployment rate has been less than three percent for years. In that context, a 12 percent poverty rate—nearly twice that for children—is indeed a puzzle.

**Chauffeured like royalty, our kids are the center of the universe, and the hardships of poverty are as unimaginable to them as life without electricity.**

The students' own encounters with poor people had been few and largely unsympathetic. One recalled an old guy who lived in a shack outside her small town. She couldn't write more; she had never really met him. A student whose mother worked with women leaving welfare had donated her old Chevy to a battered women's shelter, then learned that the recipient totaled it on her way home from a bar. "Next time, I'll sell my car to someone who'll take care of it," the student wrote with fresh anger.

An athlete recalled going to a hockey practice at age nine, where a man with dirty hands and mismatched boots asked him for a dollar, then another. The boy gave him $2. A decade later, he remembered that he'd had no money left for a snack and that his mother later scolded: Don't talk to strangers.

Only one student had known some poor people well enough to grasp the complexity of their troubles. He'd worked with schizophrenic homeless men through his Catholic high school. When he wrote of his experience, he could call the men by name. Ralph might have slept in doorways, muttered at voices in his head, and refused all help except food and occasional doses of Haldol, but he'd also laughed at jokes, craved chocolate, and embedded himself in this student's moral memory.

In the main, though, my students' stories reflected little of what I'd learned about poverty firsthand during the four years I spent writing about poverty and welfare as a newspaper reporter. Like most people who spend time with those at the bottom of the economic ladder, I know that poverty generally has a mixture of causes.

Troubled kids; unstable housing; depression and social isolation; mistrust of birth control and authority; lack of discipline or talent for good jobs; old cars or no car; a weakness for crack or booze; lousy schools; Byzantine welfare rules; bad attitudes; faithless partners; jobs without sick days, health care, decent wages, or upward mobility all conspire to keep one in place. Not to mention race, age, gender, how you speak, and how you smell.

Often, a person I'd interviewed would get a job and make a start, only to face some crisis and be thrown back onto welfare. Learning about this absence of personal reserves—no relative to watch sick kids, no friend to drive them to work when the car broke down, no one to lend them $50 for a uniform, no confidence that they could clear this hurdle and keep running—was an education for one raised with brisk, middle-class resolve, and a platoon of friends and family to call on when trouble came.

Of course, like my students, I didn't know all this at 18, either. But the times injected sympathy like Salk vaccine into its young. The civil rights movement; trenchant accounts of poor Americans by Michael Harrington and Homer Bigart; the national will to give adequate food, health care, housing, and jobs to poor people made us all reformers—at least until the riots in Watts and Detroit, excesses of the welfare rights movement, and the inflationary pressures of the 1970s began to erode that consensus.

I am worried about the impact of those memories fading from our national consciousness the way the Depression's lard sandwiches already have. The loss of our collective memory of poverty—with the

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lessons it offers about temperance, thrift, compassion, social obligations, and the randomness of misfortune—has serious implications, not just for the Democrats, whose political roots lie in such history, but for the country as a whole.

Over time, an absence of concern for the poor could erode public support for the great safety nets of old age—Social Security and Medicare. Why should we support old people if they didn't save enough when they were young? In foreign affairs, it could make us dangerously stingy and isolationist. Why give foreign aid to hungry children in Africa? There's always Malthus. Since minorities have higher poverty rates, lack of knowledge or concern about poverty will retard efforts to bridge our continuing racial divides.

A democratic society relies on interdependence and mutual responsibility to work well. Just as poor people have an obligation to work and contribute to society, the prosperous have an obligation to open doors, reward effort, and share their wealth to ensure that people who work hard—at whatever wage level—can live decently and put their children in good schools. But without grandparents to nag about starving children in Africa, developing that sense of social obligation in future generations is going to take some work from all of us.

## Maslow Was Wrong

In the 1960s, psychologist Abraham Maslow popularized the notion that there was a clear and orderly pattern to human development. Once people are freed from satisfying basic needs for food, shelter, security, and love, Maslow argued, they would be driven by an almost biological need to transcend their own ordinary, daily lives and help others realize their potential.

By Maslow's logic, young Americans—the most prosperous generation ever—should be launching a new renaissance of public service and philanthropy, turning their attention outward, fighting injustice, and advocating for the disadvantaged. But it's clear from the students in my class that prosperity alone isn't enough to instill Maslow's notion of noblesse oblige in the young.

In my seminar class, there were idealists—but some came with a '90s twist. "I want to help people," one student told me, "but I want a good income." In researching career possibilities, she was delighted to find a posting on some Web site for an executive director of a children's health care project in Los Angeles. Annual salary: $120,000. Never mind that most people working for nonprofits will be lucky to earn half that. She'd seen the Promised Land: a chance to do good and make good simultaneously.

Thanks to the work of Alexander Astin, a distinguished professor at UCLA, we know that this student is not alone in her ambition. Since 1966, Astin has been asking thousands of college freshmen each fall what they want from life. It's a kind of collective freshman essay, telling the rest of us, year-by-year, what matters most to the nation's 18-year-olds.

Freshmen have grown steadily less idealistic and interested in politics over the decades. In 1998, only 17 percent of college freshmen expressed interest in "influencing the political structure." Less than a third identified "promoting racial understanding" as an important life goal. In Astin's survey, being "well off financially" has risen to the top of students' list of life objectives. It's twice as important as developing a "philosophy of life"—that's essentially a reversal from the late 1960s.

It's tempting to blame the young for callowness. But that's as disingenuous as Hollywood producers labeling violent films and video games for those over 17 while marketing them to middle-schoolers. Our children learn their values from us, after all, and those of us who marched on Washington and knocked on doors for Clean Gene haven't carried the habit of activism into adulthood.

It's not hard to see why. With two parents working or divorced parents managing alone, the last thing most of us crave is a trip to the ghetto to ladle soup to ungrateful panhandlers. Our kids are more likely to see us staying late at the office, working out at the gym, or rushing through dinner and hauling them to soccer practice than signing up for political committee assignments.

From that sheltered vantage point, too, our kids are less likely to see any *need* for volunteering in a soup kitchen or electing socially concerned legislators, much less interest. Chauffeured like royalty, our kids are the center of the universe, and the hardships of poverty are as unimaginable to them as life without electricity.

## Reality Check

In September, the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics released a state study on philanthropy, comparing people's wealth to their charitable contributions. Much to many people's surprise, it wasn't ultra-rich Massachusetts that topped the list of giving, but dirt-poor Mississippi. Massachusetts, in


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fact, ranked dead last, with its residents' average donation half that of those made by people in Mississippi. Overall, residents of all the nation's poorest states are also those who give the largest percentage of their income to charity.

Analysts chalked up the difference in giving to Yankee thriftiness and Southern hospitality. But I think there's another answer: Our sense of obligation to the less fortunate often stems from our proximity to them. Live in Mississippi and poverty is hard to miss, but live in Weston, Massachusetts, and your Valhalla will rarely be disturbed by the sight of guilt-inducing poor folks.

In most of middle-class America today, suburban sprawl has exacerbated our isolation by class. Thirty-mile commutes and pee-wee baseball champions leave us alone in our cars, cursing our fellow drivers, for hundreds of hours a year. Cloistered in our homogenous planned developments—blissfully free of such threats to property values as affordable apartments—we're unlikely to bump into anyone on food stamps, except maybe our housekeepers. And it's not as though our homeowners' associations are campaigning to take Section 8 vouchers, whose struggling recipients might soften our hearts if they actually lived next door.

**Our sense of obligation to the less fortunate often stems from our proximity to them.**

Thanks to this kind of social stratification, it's possible today for students like those in my class to graduate from public schools without ever rubbing shoulders with someone whose thrift-store clothes are actually a necessity. When kids do have the rare opportunity to mingle with those on the wrong side of the tracks, though, the experience can have revelatory effects.

Indeed, my students thought most deeply about poverty during 20-hour internships with four agencies that work with poor people. No one complained about the assignment, except to worry about how it would be graded and about venturing into bad neighborhoods. "This is the part of town my dad told me to stay away from," one student wrote after his first visit to a drop-in center for homeless men.

The internships gave them a wider set of encounters with poor people and a chance to compare their own circumstances. One student sat in on a conference with a 21-year-old resident of a charity-run residential hotel as a counselor warned the young woman that she had to start saving money or she'd lose her room.

"Fine, I'll leave," the resident snapped.

The student wrote later: "It's like me arguing with my mother except that in the end, I usually choose the right thing."

Another student described a homeless shelter—the cheap soap in gaudy pink; the bulky security guard checking for weapons; a young woman's bursting pride at her tidy, bare room, shared with two other women and smaller than the student's own dorm room. She was astonished to meet a grandfatherly man consigned to a residential hotel because his late wife's medical bills had ruined him financially. He defied her image of who is poor.

A third student, working at a Minneapolis soup kitchen, noted that the children wore clothes that would have been fashionable a decade earlier—Smurfs sweat pants, Little Mermaid t-shirts. Recalling how the kids who wore outdated clothes were taunted in her junior high, she was suddenly ashamed of her designer clothes and tried to fold her jacket and tug on her jeans to hide the labels.

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In that moment, she understood clearly the difference between merely being clothed and being clothed in a way that enables you to fit in. She saw firsthand how even good intentions can have unexpected consequences when you don't know the recipients of your charity; those Smurf sweats were likely donated by middle-class folks who thought the Salvation Army was a better place for their castoffs than the closets of their nieces or nephews.

My students also saw spendthrift ways. Young women living in a charity-run hotel carried cell phones and had professional manicures. A habit of instant gratification, the hotel manager explained. Low-level, poorly paid shelter workers gladly dumped the dirtiest work on the college kids.

In class, we examined what faith-based charities could offer—deep commitment by workers; a supportive community; and a conviction that there is value, purpose, and the possibility of redemption in every person. Should government get out of the helping business and force needy people to turn to religious charities for help? I asked. Or should poor people be allowed to choose between public agencies and private charities?

"Why should they get to choose? They're on welfare," said one student.

"The guys I know really resent the places where they have to go to church before they can have a meal," said a student who worked with homeless men. "It doesn't help to force them."

Another student reminded the class of what we'd read of the early 20th century, when private charities often made arbitrary and cruel judgments about who deserved help and who did not.

Classroom debates were vastly enriched by the students' internship experiences. Should homeless people have to work in order to get a bunk at a city homeless shelter? Should the state take their kids away if they don't? If parents are unsuccessful or irresponsible, what is owed to their children? And how can you help children without engaging the adults in their lives?

The nation would benefit from such discussions. General promises to reduce poverty or mist the landscape with compassionate conservatism don't accomplish that.

## The Other Invisible Hand

In my class, one bright student focused her final project on her grandfather. He had emigrated from Germany as a child; worked his way through a Catholic high school during the Depression; and, through diligence, family support, and religious faith, built a small business and provided college educations for his seven children.

This student, a business major, was a fervent believer in the conservative orthodoxy—hard work as the answer to bad luck and hard times. Her grandfather was Exhibit A. For the second draft of her paper, I asked her to look more closely at the role government had played in his achievements.

Sure enough, the National Guard provided her grandfather work during the Depression. He saw his first dentist when he joined the Army for World War II. The GI bill allowed him to be trained as an auto mechanic and start his own business. The Veterans Administration helped him and his wife buy the house they'd live in for 50 years. Now Social Security and Medicare help support them in retirement.

Without such context, it's easy to ignore the role luck plays in most of our lives, and how government often lurks there, quietly helping with child-care credits or student loans, work programs or pensions. With that context, she could paint a fuller portrait of the ancestor she so admired. "I guess I could support government programs," she told the class during her final presentation. "If they involve work. People have to give something back."

Giving back applies to more than poor citizens. My students had served meals to the hungry, produced a newsletter for welfare recipients, updated a guide to services for homeless men—a modest antidote to the much lamented disengagement and materialism among college freshmen.

I was heartened to learn from UCLA's Astin that there is a growing emphasis among high schools and colleges on this type of service learning, where academic work includes some engagement with the community. As I discovered, it doesn't take a recession to revive our national dialogue about poverty.

Teachers can also foster such talk by reading history with their students. See how charitable dormitories were considered a great advancement in 1900 because newsboys could sleep there for a trifle and have some chance at schooling. Discover orphanages filled with children of living parents who couldn't afford to keep them. Read of old people living with their children, their only support.

Those lessons of the past can help ensure that the present prosperity doesn't leave our kids spoiled rotten. And, in four years, when the Democrats again return to the nation's TV sets and invoke their party's legacy of compassion, a few more viewers might actually know what they're talking about. ●


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# The Washington Monthly Journalism Award

**SEPTEMBER 2000**

## MAURA REYNOLDS AND ROBYN DIXON

"The War Has No Rules for Russian Forces Fighting in Chechnya"
& "Chechnya's Grimmest Industry"

*Los Angeles Times*, September 17 & 18, 2000

*Reynolds and Dixon delve deep into the human rights violations perpetrated in the conflict between Russia and Chechnya and the motivations behind them. Reynolds' article explores the actions and motivations of Russian forces on the front lines in the rebel state, detailing atrocities committed under a de facto immunity from human rights laws. Dixon's article reveals the horrors of the Chechen kidnapping industry, which continues to fuel the underground Chechen economy.*

## MICHAEL GRUNWALD

"Engineers of Power: Inside The Army Corps" - Five Part Series

*The Washington Post*, September 10 - 14, 2000

*In a five-part series, Grunwald explains the purpose, history, functions, and failures of the Army Corps of Engineers. After interviewing over 1,000 sources and reviewing tens of thousands of documents, Grunwald reveals that the corps has become a firm part of Washington's iron triangle and is used primarily as a source of project-based revenue for the districts of its congressional supporters, rather than fulfilling its mandate of protecting and improving the environment.*

## ABC NEWS

"Hopkins 24/7"

*ABC News*, September 2000

*A six-part documentary miniseries which follows the doctors of John Hopkins University Hospital over the course of three months. The documentary offers up blunt truths about the practice of medicine in this country: from physician exhaustion to luck-of-the-draw treatments. Shot in real time on handheld digital cameras, the program illustrates the successes and failures of one of the nation's top medical facilities.*

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# Help Wanted

*Why welfare reform needs good social workers*

BY ALEXANDER NGUYEN

MILWAUKEE RESIDENT MARY Rhoden has been on and off welfare for years. Her trouble hasn't been getting a job. In fact, she's had quite a few. It's keeping them that's the problem. The mother of five fought with her supervisor and was fired as a counselor for a teenage program. She quit as a hotel maid because the boss got on her nerves, and she walked out of a clerical job because others made more money.

Rhoden's difficulties aren't just the product of bad attitude. According to a profile of her in *The New York Times*, Rhoden was molested as a young child, and when she tried telling her mother, her mother ignored it, leaving Rhoden with a deep distrust of authority. At 13, Rhoden ran away from home and eventually went into foster care but, like many women on welfare with a history of sexual abuse, her problems remained. By 17, she was suicidal, attempting once to poison herself. Rhoden's lingering mental health issues pose a steep barrier to her success in the workforce.

For the most part, the *Times* seems to have known more about Rhoden's deep-seated psychological issues than her caseworkers at the welfare office did. Despite participating in various training programs and cycling in and out of the welfare office for years, she never thought of confiding in her caseworkers. But then, why would she?

Rhoden's welfare caseworker is likely the same check-writing eligibility clerk who has always been there, scrutinizing her utility bills, searching for signs of unreported income that could bring an end to her monthly assistance checks. Only now, since welfare reform came to Wisconsin in 1996, Rhoden's caseworker does all that with the reminder: Get a job.

Judging from Rhoden's story, the "get a job" approach hasn't been too successful for her or a good number of other welfare recipients. A recent study from the Erikson Institute's Project Match found that simply funneling people into jobs without adequate preparation has failed miserably: 57 percent of former welfare moms were again unemployed after only six months and 70 percent had left or quit their jobs within 12 months.

But imagine a different scenario:

What if Rhoden went to the welfare office and instead of finding a low-level clerk, she were greeted by a sympathetic social worker? Someone Rhoden could trust and who, along with job leads, might connect her with psychological counseling to help her deal with her sexual abuse. And when she did get a job, what if the social worker called once in a while to see how she was getting along, encouraging Rhoden to tough out the hard times and advising her on how to deal with her boss?

To be sure, a social worker's counsel is not nearly enough to conquer the lasting effects of childhood sexual abuse. But there's some evidence that a good social worker can be the glue that helps make women like Rhoden stick with jobs and start climbing up the economic ladder. And those folks still on welfare today are going to need all the help they can get.

## Doled Out

Welfare rolls are at their lowest level in 30 years. More than five million former recipients are now working. States like Wisconsin and Wyoming have shed more than 90 percent of their rolls over the last six years—the nation, 53 percent.

Thanks to that massive decline, Democrats and Republicans alike now shower the new system with praise. No longer do we hear the stories of the "welfare queen" and calls for cracking down on cheats.

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Instead, as *The American Prospect* wrote recently, welfare reform has radically changed several million people "from being considered 'undeserving poor' because they don't work, to being viewed as 'deserving' poor because they do."

Despite the bipartisan declarations of success, it's a little early to declare victory. The exodus from welfare has slowed to a crawl in some states: New Mexico's caseload fell by only a fraction of one percent last year, and Tennessee's declined by 1.5 percent, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The numbers suggest that after four years of this social experiment, the majority of folks who were able to get jobs have got them. As for the rest, well, they are demonstrating what liberals have always argued: that poverty is a complicated social ill, stemming from a host of complex issues that can't be cured solely with a welfare check—or an admonition from the government to get a job.

The welfare rolls today are loaded with women like Rhoden. In 1998, researchers at the University of Utah conducted a survey of state residents who had received welfare for at least three years. A huge proportion of long-term recipients reported serious problems that posed significant barriers to their ever getting off the dole. More than half were victims of childhood physical or sexual abuse; 55 percent experienced domestic violence; over 40 percent suffered from depression; 47 percent were addicted to drugs and alcohol; and 41 percent were struggling with serious health problems.

Welfare reform has given states the money and flexibility to create new programs, such as drug treatment and mental health counseling, that are desperately needed for a sizable proportion of women still on the rolls. But officials have discovered that just because they build programs doesn't mean women will come. That's largely because front-line caseworkers in most welfare offices aren't trained even to figure out what kind of problems their clients have, much less how to help them.

Even Bill Clinton noted recently that something is clearly amiss in the welfare office today, because a sizeable number of those million or so low-income adults who have lost their welfare benefits are losing their food stamps and Medicaid insurance, even though most are still eligible once they enter the workforce. (Official assessments of welfare reform in Indiana show that four-fifths of former welfare recipients who held a job were still living under the poverty line, making less than $7,500 a year.)

Three-quarters of the funding set aside by Congress to ensure continued Medicaid coverage for low-income families—$383 million—has still not been spent as of this year. Three-quarters of low-income children and their families who qualified did not even apply for health insurance, a recent study found, and two-thirds of families who qualified also left the food-stamp program.

"A lot of people moved from welfare to work," said Clinton. "And they literally don't know that they're still eligible for this assistance."

## Looking Through The Plexiglas

For clients like Rhoden, mired in personal struggles, the simplistic jobs-first approach that most welfare offices have adopted is not a long-term solution. They need much more help. And help—like food stamps and Medicaid—is out there, if only someone could show Rhoden and her troubled counterparts how to find it. That's why a social worker might be just what she needs.

Old-fashioned social workers were trained to do precisely what welfare caseworkers often aren't: to identify a client's problems and link them to available services. In effect, social workers are facilitators, people who could make the connection between the old check-writing welfare system and the new get-off-your-duff-and-work system.

For instance, a social worker might look at a woman with Rhoden's history of mental illness and realize that realistically, she might never be able to work full time. Instead, the social worker might help her apply for disability benefits or send her to a mental health program rather than force Rhoden to languish in work readiness programs. A social worker also would make sure that if Rhoden did go to work, she would keep her food stamps and other benefits available to her. But the only way for that to happen is for a different kind of person to be waiting for Rhoden at the welfare office.

"Today, [welfare office workers] don't even spend time with you," said Janlee Wong, a social worker in Sacramento, California. "They just say, 'Get a job.' People will bring in their problems and they'll say, 'I understand you have problems, but get a job.' You or I can stand at a window and say, 'Get a job.'"

Kerry O'Brien, the founder of the D.C. Employment Justice Center, which provides legal services to low-income D.C. residents, says that for the most part, "the main function of caseworkers is to determine whether or not someone is eligible for benefits. They are really like bank tellers. Their job is to fill out forms, shuffle papers. That's their job—to


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distribute income."

O'Brien says the system needs to be retooled so that someone keeps track of a woman who shows up six times with a black eye and says she fell down the stairs each time. "That shouldn't be the job of someone who gets paid $18,000 a year and has little more than a high school education," she says.

Here again is a job for a social worker. Acting as a link between individual clients and the system, social workers could prevent clients like Rhoden from falling through the cracks. They might become privy to personal problems that an occasional across-the-Plexiglas conference with a caseworker would never reveal. Social workers can also offer clients the intangibles—like a sympathetic shoulder—that can mean the difference between languishing in poverty and getting back on their feet. Moreover, they can offer hope, which sometimes can mean more to a client trying to get her life in order than a GED class.

People in the nonprofit world have long known that the personal intervention from a competent, concerned caseworker can help today's welfare recipients get a leg up. Take Chicago's Project Match, for instance, a private nonprofit program that began in the city's infamous Cabrini-Green public housing project. Serving extremely disadvantaged clients, Project Match helps the hard-to-employ make their gradual ascent into the workplace by retraining welfare officer caseworkers to behave like old-fashioned social workers.

Once retrained, workers help women develop concrete skills such as the ability to adhere to a schedule or to deal with supervisors. These workers develop a plan that might start out with a welfare recipient taking a child to an extracurricular activity once a week, or volunteering in a class. If the client succeeds in fulfilling this requirement, the caseworker will, like a tough coach, gradually add more activities and responsibilities to the schedule until the client is declared job-ready.

Failure is considered part of the learning process. If the client fails, the caseworker is there for her to fall back on and will work with her to fulfill a different task or to identify the obstacles keeping the client from succeeding. Caseworkers keep computerized diaries to keep track of the progress—of which there is plenty. A five-year study of 470 participants from Cabrini-Green found an increasing number were able to work all 12 months of the year, growing from 26 percent in the first year to 54 percent in the fifth year. The study concluded that although the process was gradual, "many Project Match participants do become steady workers."

**Social workers may be just what our current welfare system needs to make welfare reform a genuine success. But good luck finding one there.**

But the key to the success, says director Toby Herr, is the front line worker. "That's why this system is designed to take eligibility workers and transform them into more sensitive caring and knowledgeable counselors," she says.

The social work approach isn't just a bunch of squishy New Age psychobabble, either. A 1996 Urban Institute study found that many hard-core cases on welfare needed more time to acknowledge their difficulties, and then to be willing to seek help for them. Crucial to getting to that stage, the study noted, was developing trust between the workers and the clients. One worker in the study noted, "Sometimes you have to 'nurture' a recipient into treatment. Over time, recipients begin to believe that staff really care about them and their well-being."

### Welfare Changes, But The Welfare Office Doesn't

Social workers may be just what our current welfare system needs to make welfare reform a genuine success. But good luck finding one there. According to a survey by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), only one percent of its entire



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membership works in public welfare offices. Of course, who can blame them? As Mark Greenberg, senior staff attorney at the Center for Law and Social Policy, points out, "Very few people with master's degrees in social work want to sit around calculating income and verifying rent receipts."

It wasn't always like this. In the early 1900s, social workers were instrumental in public welfare. Social workers like Harry Hopkins, who later headed Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, and Frances Perkins, who went on to become the first female Secretary of Labor, were leaders in creating the social safety net in the 1930s.

Even then, though, social workers had started to get a bad rap. The profession had its roots in the late 19th century Charity Organization Societies, in which mostly white women from the upper-middle classes made friendly home visits and showered their clients with advice of mostly Christian virtue and morals, while handing out largesse. Their approach found its way into government antipoverty efforts, so that relief was doled out only to the "deserving poor."

During the 1960s War on Poverty, liberals dismissed this approach as condescending and supercilious. The poor needed money, they argued, not counsel. Social workers' arbitrary assessments, they believed, had no place in such a decision. Welfare offices drastically cut the number of social workers, and front-line workers became little more than clerks concerned with eligibility verification and fraud detection—a system that had the benefit of being cheap—and a bureaucracy rapidly grew to support these two tasks.

That's the system as it existed in 1996, when Clinton signed the Republican-driven welfare reform bill that limited cash-assistance, mandated workfare, and turned over control of the program to the states. The bill radically changed expectations for welfare recipients. Unfortunately, it didn't much change the welfare office. The same low-level clerks who have been checking rental stubs for years were the same people charged with transforming thousands of Mary Rhodens into self-sufficient, tax-paying members of society. O'Brien says, "They are all of a sudden expected to be miracle workers."

## Tough Lovers

The seven million people remaining on welfare today are going to need more than tough love to get them out of poverty. Perhaps, then, what the system needs is tough lovers—a class of workers employed not as gatekeepers but as innovators, confidantes, mentors, even coaches, who draw on their highest talents, their deepest passions and their keenest intellect to lift their clients out of poverty.

Some states are starting to realize this. While they aren't bringing in a drove of freshly-minted graduates of social work masters' programs, places like Iowa and Utah are retraining capable front-line workers to screen recipients for substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, even learning disabilities, and to refer these clients to programs appropriate for their various problems.

In Oregon, when welfare recipients drop out or stop coming to work training classes and risk losing their benefits, social workers track them down—even visiting them at home to find out what's going on. Through their contacts, social workers keep a lookout for signs of such problems as mental illness or substance abuse that might be causing the women to fail. When they do identify such problems, they refer those clients to appropriate services.

The results of Oregon's original pilot project, called Step Up, were fairly dramatic. The program cut the "no show" rates in county programs by half, and nearly tripled participation in work programs. Lynne Murray, a staffer with Oregon Adult and Family Services in Corvallis, says that the home visits by social workers were actually welcomed by many clients. "In a lot of cases, people were glad that someone cared enough about them to come see them. It made them feel better about the whole process," she says. "It's a big, big job. But for the most part, it seems to be working."

Replicating Oregon's model throughout the rest of the country has tremendous potential for helping the poor. But it also promises another, unexpected benefit. These programs have the potential to lure some new blood into the welfare office. No idealistic young person looking for a rewarding career wants to work in the welfare office if it means sitting at a desk writing checks all day. But he might come knocking if he saw the welfare office as a place where he could actually help someone.

Tracking down welfare moms and cajoling them to stick with the program, finding them late night child care, and just listening to their sorrows, promises to be far more challenging—and rewarding—than most dot-com desk jobs. Creating a demand for social workers in the welfare office could attract a whole new generation of people to government service. And who knows? After being maligned and neglected for the past 30 years, social work might regain its good name. ●



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# Don't Mean A Thing

*Why your vote doesn't count unless you live in Kalamazoo or Morgantown*

BY JAMES P. ROONEY

DURING THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL debate this year, moderator Jim Lehrer asked George W. Bush and Al Gore to contrast their approaches to preventing future oil crises. Gore, predictably and at length, proposed developing renewable energy sources and creating tax credits that would spur the development of fuel-efficient cars. But when it came time for Bush to respond, his answer was less predictable:

"I want to develop the coal resources in America," he said emphatically.

*Coal?* Solar, maybe. Natural gas, even methane gas, would seem more obvious responses to the question. But coal? Bush sounded like John Lewis rallying mine workers in the 1950s.

Of course, nothing in the canned televised debates could be that extemporaneous. No, Bush's solution to the nation's energy woes was a calculated response, targeted not at the 30 million or so Americans who may have been watching the debates, but the 951,000 registered voters in the heart of the nation's coal country: West Virginia.

It's hard to imagine that little old West Virginia could hold such sway in the presidential election. But if you think back to the debate, you probably won't recall either candidate stumping for, say, more earthquake-victim relief funds or subway-token subsidies for seniors—goodies that might appeal to the residents of more populous states like California or New York.

In fact, for the Republican candidate, West Virginia, with its five votes in the Electoral College, is one of a handful of battleground states where this year's election is likely to be decided. The other states up for grabs are Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin.

If you live in one of these states, the political parties care about your opinion and have worked hard for your vote. If your state is not on that list, the parties think your vote won't impact the election. And they are right.

If you don't believe that statement, consider this: In 1992, the Clinton campaign targeted 80 percent of its $37 million advertising budget to the states it had identified as battleground states. In this year's race, the two parties have run television ads exclusively in the states listed above.

Campaign appearances are just as targeted. Al Gore and Joe Lieberman kicked off the fall campaign with appearances in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, and Illinois over a 27-hour marathon. Bush responded with appearances in Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Since then, campaign appearances by the presidential candidates outside of the battleground states have been rare indeed.

## Campaign Swings

Much as I enjoy the geography lesson on small towns in the Midwest every four years, when I find myself stuck reading about the candidates' political ads in the *Boston Globe* (because the candidates rarely advertise in Massachusetts), I am left to wonder why my vote, which would count so much if I lived in Cleveland, counts for so little in Boston.

The answer has to do with the Electoral College, but it takes some explaining. As good a place as any to start is with Richard Nixon.

In 1956, Nixon wanted to campaign for vice president in all 50 states. Eisenhower's campaign staff vetoed the idea because they thought Nixon's show of youthful vigor would contrast poorly with Eisenhower, who was still recovering from a heart attack. In 1960, when he was running his own show, Nixon—against all sound political advice—pledged to do what he had been prevented from doing four years earlier.

As part of his effort to fulfill that pledge, on August 26, 1960, he made a triumphal campaign appearance in Atlanta. Atlantans lined Peachtree Street, according to Theodore White in *The Making of the President, 1960*, "not in the twos and threes of ordinary, orderly political demonstrations, but ... in ranks five deep, six deep, eight deep that blotted the sidewalks and then, as one

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approached the center of the city, choked the streets themselves."

Speaking to an overflowing crowd in Hurt Park, Nixon told them, "In the last quarter century there hasn't been a Democratic candidate for president that has ... bothered to campaign in the state of Georgia. I don't think that's a good thing. The people of this state, the people of all our country should have a choice ... in selecting the man who is going to lead the nation."


**Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation**

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of publication: The Washington Monthly. 2. Publication number: 7046403. 3. Date of filing: October 2000. 4. Frequency of issue: monthly except combined Jan/Feb and July/Aug. 5. Number of issues published annually: 10. 6. Annual subscription price: $49.95. 7. Complete mailing address of known publication office: 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters of general business offices of the publisher: same. 9. Names and complete address of publisher, editor and managing editor: Publisher, Tara Mansbridge; Editor, Charles Peters; Managing Editor, vacant. 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, Dc 20009. 10. Owner: The Washington Monthly Co., an unincorporated joint venture between The Washington Monthly Corporation and The Washington Monthly Limited Partnership, of which The Washington Monthly Publishing Corporation is sole general partner. All entities at 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Owners of 1 percent or more of shares of The Washington Monthly Limited Partnership: Preston Brown, Washington, DC; Warren Buffett, Omaha, NE; The Elizabeth E. Chilton Marital Trust, Charleston, WV; Estate of Joseph Cole, Lyndhurst, OH; Alexander Ewing, Millbrook, NY; James Fallows, Washington, DC; Nancy M. Folger, Washington, DC; Gene Gordon, Bethesda, MD; Edgar Kaiser Jr., Vancouver, BC, Canada; Phil Keisling, Portland, OR; Nicholas Lemann, Pelham, NY; Morton Mandel, Cleveland, OH; Matthew Nemerson, New Haven, CT; New Haven Terminal, New Haven, CT; Richard L. Ottinger, Washington, DC; Ann Peretz, Cambridge, MA; Tom Peters, Palo Alto, CA; Julien Phillips, San Mateo, CA; Joseph Rosenfield, Des Moines, IA; Estate of Sidney B. Sachs, Washington, DC; William Schulz, Phoenix, AZ; Estate of Philip M. Stern, Washington, DC; Anne Thayer, New York, NY; Howard W. Young, Washington, DC. Owners of 1 percent or more of stock of The Washington Monthly Corporation: Estate of Timothy J. Adams, Washington, DC; Russell Baker, Leesburg, VA; Taylor Branch, Baltimore, MD; A. Whitney Ellsworth, New York, NY; Joseph Freitas Jr., San Francisco, CA; Estate of Murray Kempton, New York, NY; Suzannah Lessard, Washington, DC; Estate of Peter Lisagor, Arlington, VA; Charles Peters, Washington, DC; PKL Co. Inc., New York, NY; John Rothchild, Miami, FL; Eleanor Rovere, Barrytown, NY; Hugh Sidey, Potomac, MD; Carole Lee Smith, Salem, OR; James C. Thomson Jr., Cambridge, MA; Estate of Carol Trueblood, Washington, DC. Owners of 1 percent or more of stock in The Washington Monthly Publishing Corporation: Joseph D. Crowley, New Haven, CT; Kanawha Banking and Trust, Trustee of John D. Rockefeller IV, Charleston, WV; Fiona Beck, Washington, DC; John Spencer, Middlebury, VT; Estate of Carol Trueblood, Washington, DC. 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: Marline Resources Company, 645 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022. 12. Not applicable. 13. Publication title: The Washington Monthly. 14. Issue date for circulation data: October 2000. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: (average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months) actual number of copies of single issue publisher nearest to filing date. A. Total number of copies printed: (20,450) 21,000. B. Paid and/or request circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: (5,921) 4,600. 2. Mail subscription: (13,646)13,004. C. Total paid and/or requested circulation: (17,956) 17,604. D. Free distribution by mail: samples, complimentary, and other free copies: (300) 250. E. Free distribution outside the mail (carriers or other means):(947) 2,225. F. Total free distribution:(1,247) 2,475. G. Total distribution: (19,203) 20,079. H. Copies not distributed: (1,247) 921. I. Total: (20,450) 21,000. J. Percent paid and/or requested circulation: (87.80) 83.83. 16. This statement of ownership will be printed in the November issue of this publication. 17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Tara Mansbridge, Publisher. 10/11/00.


White says Nixon later remarked that this "was the most impressive demonstration he had seen in 14 years of campaigning."

What's striking 40 years later is that Richard Nixon was ever received this enthusiastically. More pertinent is what happened next. *Nothing* happened next. When the election campaign began in earnest after Labor Day, Nixon did not return to Georgia. There was simply no point. He did not stand a chance in Georgia, and on election day, Kennedy walloped him.

This episode illustrates one of the principle rules of presidential campaigning: If a state is sure to vote for one party, neither candidate has an incentive to campaign there. That's because the current rules award the winning candidate all the electors from that state. Even if Nixon had made more of an effort in Georgia, he would not have netted a single elector unless he somehow overcame his 25-point deficit. By the same token Kennedy, with such a huge lead, was going to get all the electoral votes available. He, too, had nothing to gain from campaigning in Georgia, and he only stopped there briefly for part of a day.

Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign in California followed a similar pattern. Clinton started the campaign nearly 30 points ahead in the state, which has 54 electoral votes and is the biggest prize in the electoral sweepstakes. But as the election neared and George Bush gained in the polls, Clinton's lead dipped to 15 points. Still, the Clinton campaign decided not to run television ads there, gambling that he could hold on—and he did.

Almost half the states are sure wins for one of the parties. In the last six competitive presidential elections since the Kennedy-Nixon race in 1960, eight states voted all but once for the Democratic presidential candidate; 15 states did the same for the Republican candidate. Only one of these states, Pennsylvania, is a battleground this year.

## Winner Takes All

The candidates usually focus on big states, a strategy that seems to defy logic, considering that the Electoral College has a small-state bias. States that warrant only one representative in the House of Representatives nevertheless have three electoral votes a piece because a state's electoral total is the sum of its representatives and its two senators. In contrast, California, with its 52 representatives, gets little extra push from its two additional votes in the Electoral College.

Still, California looms larger than most of the smallest states put together again, because of the winner-takes-all nature of the vote. Only California offers the promise—or the danger—of 54 votes at one time. In


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1960, Nixon identified New York, California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Texas, and Michigan as battleground states. To this list Kennedy added New Jersey and Massachusetts. These states, in that order, were the nine states with the most electoral votes.

This year's list of battleground states is considerably different, thanks in part to Nixon's "Southern strategy." By moving the Republican party in a more conservative direction as the Democratic party's Southern support started to fracture, Nixon threatened to turn the South from solidly Democratic to solidly Republican in presidential elections and also knocked away some of the Republican party's Northern support.

The Democratic party responded in 1976 by nominating former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter. The election revealed that even when the Democrats nominated a Southerner, a Democratic party victory in the South could no longer be guaranteed. Ford lost Mississippi, for example, by only two points. As a result, the focus of presidential campaigns has shifted southward.

For example, the current list of battleground states includes a number of Southern and border states, from Florida (whose 25 electoral votes make it the fourth biggest prize), to Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, and even Georgia, which Nixon lost so badly in 1960. As these states have moved into play, other states have moved out. This time around, for example, five of the 10 largest states, including California and New York, are noticeably absent, the latest victims of the winner-take-all electoral system that compels the parties to look to a minority of states for victory.

New York is easiest to understand. Despite the Republican party's best efforts, the state has voted for the Democratic party candidate in the last six close elections. In 1996, it handed Clinton a victory over Bob Dole by nearly 29 points. California voted for the Republican candidate in four of those same six elections, but voted solidly for Clinton in the last two.

## Original Intent

The delegates to the Constitutional Convention hardly had this kind of system in mind. In fact, as part of the compromise that resulted in the creation of the Electoral College, the delegates left the method of selecting electors up to the state legislatures.

The states devised numerous schemes. Legislative selection predominated early on, but the public tired of leaving the choice of electors up to legislatures that, on occasion, ignored the popular will and, by 1828, all but two states had abandoned this method.

Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Webster, and Andrew Jackson supported choosing electors by dividing states into districts in which each elector would be chosen by popular vote. In 1820, six states did so, but this method soon faded because the winner-takes-all method consolidates a state's voting power. Once adopted by some of the states, it was, as Jefferson phrased it, "folly or worse for the other[s] not to follow."

That system isn't likely to change any time soon, since the party in power in each state benefits heartily from it. Besides, voters act as if the Electoral College does not even exist. Potential voters are more likely to vote if the race is close nationally, regardless of how close the vote is in their state, according to data from the last elections. In Washington, D.C., the only jurisdiction where Walter Mondale won electoral votes besides his home state of Minnesota, voter turnout climbed to 48 percent during the hotly contested race of 1992 and then dropped to 44 percent in 1996, even though there was never a doubt which way the city would vote.

You can hardly blame the voters. Not once in the 20th century did the Electoral College winner differ from the popular vote winner. This confluence of electoral and popular winners is to some extent unexceptional; a victorious candidate must stitch together a broad, national coalition to win an Electoral College majority. Yet it masks the Electoral College's impact on every presidential election, and the profound differences in the campaign between the states that are battlegrounds and the states that are not.

That every vote does not count equally in the presidential election is a sad commentary on the present state of affairs. There has been a little movement towards changing the system of late, the most notable being an October op-ed piece in *The New York Times* by journalist Michael Lind advocating a district method for picking electors and a *Boston Globe* editorial advocating the abolition of the Electoral College. I am not as convinced as Lind is that such a change would make the candidates' discussion of the issues any more profound, but it would at least compel the candidates to try to pick up votes throughout the nation and thereby involve more of the public in the process of choosing a president.

For better or worse, the Electoral College has the potential to become an important issue after the election because, for the first time since the 1888 election of Benjamin Harrison, the winner of the electoral vote may differ from the winner of the popular vote. Indeed, Bush is leading in at least some of the national opinion polls, but Al Gore has more electoral votes in his corner.



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# Contempt of Court

*How Jesse Helms and the State Department are helping future Milosevics escape justice*

BY JONATHAN D. TEPPERMAN

ON MAY 17, TROOPS LOYAL TO THE government of Sierra Leone finally captured rebel leader Foday Sankoh in the capital, Freetown. Sankoh, head of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), had led a brutal rebellion against the government and was infamous for tactics like press-ganging children into his militia and hacking off the hands of thousands of civilians.

After his arrest, the United States government was one of the first to call for an international tribunal to try Sankoh for war crimes. Since no such permanent court exists, however, an ad-hoc one would have to be created—a difficult, expensive, and time-intensive process.

Setting up such international courts has in fact proved so complicated in the past that in the summer of 1998, diplomats from around the world gathered in Rome for a historic event: the creation of a permanent, standing International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC was envisioned as a global judicial body capable of prosecuting the perpetrators of atrocities such as genocide in Rwanda or ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, when nations are unable—or unwilling—to do so themselves.

Given its stand on Sierra Leone, one would expect the U.S. to be leading the charge to create the ICC. And indeed, the U.S. did back the international court—at first. But in 1998, something went very wrong at the Rome conference, and the U.S. ended up siding with a rogues' gallery of just six other nations, including human rights scofflaws such as Libya, Iraq, and China, in rejecting the ICC treaty. In ongoing negotiations since, the U.S. has by turns tried to weaken the court and strangle it in its crib.

Now the stage is set for a final showdown between America and the nascent court. On November 27, when diplomats next meet to hammer out the ICC's details and to finalize the relationship between the court and the United Nations, U.S. delegates will make a last push to amend the Court's founding treaty. Washington has one key demand: that all U.S. service members be excluded from the tribunal's jurisdiction.

American negotiators promise to cooperate with the court if they get their way, but warn they will abandon the ICC if they don't. The rest of the world, however, is outraged by the notion of American immunity from what was meant to be a universal tribunal. As a result, diplomats now predict that the U.S. measure will be soundly defeated. Along with it, Washington will lose the chance to participate in the greatest advance in international justice in the last 50 years, and the world's best shot at bringing criminals like Sankoh and Slobodan Milosevic to justice. And what should have been one of the last triumphs of this administration's foreign policy will have ended in a rout.

### Diagram Of A Foreign Policy Disaster

Washington's current stance has undermined the country's public commitment to the international rule of law—something it regularly touts when urging other countries to step in line. This has sapped American credibility and damaged the country's reputation abroad. And the issue now threatens to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its closest allies. By most measures, then, the ICC negotiations have been a serious policy failure. This has left the ICC's supporters at home and abroad scratching their heads, wondering what exactly went wrong. And whose fault was all of this?

The answers to those questions lie in some obvious quarters: the Pentagon and the Capitol Hill office of Washington's most infamous foreign-policy spoiler, the fiercely isolationist Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC). But responsibility also rests with the White House, which not only dithered in the face of military opposition to the court, but also squandered its opportunity for diplomacy by leaving too many details—and the ICC's defense—to a mid-rank civil servant named David Scheffer.

Things didn't start out this badly. In the mid-1990s, Washington actually led the drive to establish an inter-

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national court. Having already pushed the U.N. Security Council to create two ad hoc war-crimes tribunals for the Balkans and Rwanda—steps unprecedented since Nuremberg—President Bill Clinton and then-U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright seemed serious about their promises to get the ICC up and running before they left office. In the days leading up to the Rome conference, Clinton vowed that "the U.S. will work to see that [the ICC] is created."

Still, despite a broad and enthusiastic international consensus, the ICC was not so popular back at home. Republicans of all stripes—not just in the party's know-nothing isolationist fringe—warned darkly that the Court would undermine U.S. sovereignty and expose Americans to an unaccountable foreign tribunal. Rational or not, this fear is owed to the fact that, under the rules of the court, even non-members like the U.S. remain subject to its jurisdiction. (This is, after all, supposed to be a universal tribunal.) Thus, an American who commits a crime abroad can be tried if the country where the crime occurs agrees—whether Washington likes it or not.

And Washington did not like it at all. The GOP and Pentagon brass were horrified by the idea that an American could theoretically be subjected to an investigation without U.S. approval. This, they warned, would open the door to politically motivated prosecutions of American soldiers working abroad on U.S. or even U.N. missions.

The Clinton administration, with its historic fear of crossing the military, did little to publicly counter this opposition. In fact, rather than mounting a strong defense of the court in domestic debates, the White House caved in and simply adopted the Pentagon's argument as its own. As Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch recounts, "The Department of Defense became the decisive government agency in defining what U.S. policy ought to be. And for reasons I can't explain, the president and the National Security Council were unable and unwilling to say, 'Look, we've taken on board the military's views here but we're not going to have the Department of Defense set our position.' It was striking that [the administration] was unable to see that there were bigger issues involved."

Once converted to the Pentagon's parochial gospel, the White House decided to push the ICC for a measure that would exempt American service members from the tribunal's jurisdiction. But the idea was wildly unpopular abroad. This isn't hard to understand, for the U.S. proposal would leave the new international court with jurisdiction over the citizens of every country in the world save one. And most of the tribunal's backers were already sensitive to signs of American exceptionalism—what the French decry as "hyper-power."

To make matters worse, rather than send Secretary of State Madeleine Albright—or even Clinton himself—to sell its new, unpalatable position overseas, the administration left it to State Department staffer David Scheffer to deliver its conflicted message. A high-level lobbying effort from the White House just might have won over reluctant and skeptical allies. But no such attempt was ever made. And the results have been predictable.

## The Road To Nowhere

Scheffer had joined the administration in the heady early days, when its support for international human rights efforts was at its peak, and the U.S. was taking the lead on war-crime tribunals for the Balkans and Rwanda. Hitching his cart to Albright's, Scheffer served as her senior advisor and legal counsel and built up good international credentials through his work on the ad hoc courts. In August 1997, he became the first-ever ambassador-at-large for war crimes, and as such, the U.S. point man for negotiations on the ICC.

From the moment that Washington dropped its bold rhetoric and began to press for an exemption from the ICC, Scheffer's job became virtually impossible. From that point on, he told *The Washington Monthly*, he was caught between a "rock and a hard place." Neither those in favor nor those opposed to the treaty showed any inclination to compromise, leaving Scheffer scant space to maneuver. In trying to satisfy the concerns of both his constituencies, he inevitably satisfied neither.

Thus, in 1998, Scheffer found himself seated at the bargaining table in Rome, pushing an American agenda that seemed to conflict mightily with the nation's public positions elsewhere around the globe. Things quickly went awry. The Americans seemed poorly briefed, taking positions that confused other diplomats. The U.S. team angered colleagues by making one demand after another, while conceding little in return.

Not only was Scheffer's team unprepared, but they also made strategic blunders. Unwise early compromises would later be regretted. For example, one way to ensure a U.S. veto over prosecutions would have been to require approval of the Security Council (where the U.S. holds a permanent seat) for investigations. But Scheffer gave this up at Rome. Once gone, it has proved very hard to recover.

Still, many of the Americans' requests—which included significant revisions to the treaty—were accommodated. With troops stationed around the globe, the U.S. negotiators were acutely aware that American


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personnel were particularly vulnerable to the court. So they pressured other countries for added protection. As a result, the participants agreed to make the ICC's jurisdiction "complementary," meaning it would only kick in if the home country of an alleged criminal was either unable or unwilling to conduct its own investigation.

This agreement on prosecutions should have calmed the fears of nations with well-functioning judicial systems. But to the surprise of U.S. allies, it failed to mollify Washington. Eventually, the prime backers of the court—including key American allies such as Canada and the UK—drew the line. Flush from their success in Ottawa, where, over American objections, they had recently concluded a treaty to ban land mines, the "like-minded group" held its ground. And on the last day of the conference, the U.S. cast its vote against the court.

The vote came as something of a surprise to the assembled diplomats. Because the U.S. team, under Scheffer's stewardship, had failed to make American objections clear enough early on, too many other countries had underestimated the vehemence of U.S. opposition.

"We didn't know until the last minute that they wouldn't sign on," says Philippe Kirsch, the Canadian ambassador who chaired the Rome conference. According to Bill Pace, coordinator of the NGO Coalition for an International Court, "Scheffer had a government not paying a lot of thought to this process because it wasn't thought possible. But the U.S. grossly underestimated the number of countries willing to agree to the ICC."

### Fall Guy

In the two years since that fateful Rome conference, Scheffer's job has become a bitter one. Despite having voted against the international court, Washington remains involved in the successive talks as a "non-state party," an ambiguous role with little leverage, even for the world's sole superpower. Washington's adamant position in these talks has earned Scheffer withering criticism from all sides, including human rights groups, foreign allies, and even some of Scheffer's former colleagues (albeit off the record, since few dare openly attack a sitting U.S. ambassador). He has also had to face down hostility from Republican members of Congress—especially Helms, his frequent sparring partner—who worry that, despite Scheffer's attempts to placate them, he is nonetheless leading America into a treaty that will undermine its sovereignty.

It didn't help Scheffer's domestic efforts when, in late 1999, the U.N. prosecutor for the ad hoc war crimes court on the former Yugoslavia announced that she was conducting an inquiry into whether NATO's bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo air war had violated international law.

Although the U.S. and its allies were ultimately exonerated, Republicans and the Pentagon were outraged that their actions would encounter such scrutiny from a body the U.S. had helped found. This, they declared, was exactly the sort of political persecution Americans would suffer were they to join the ICC. The White House was deeply embarrassed by the controversy, and its already tentative support for the court weakened.

**Washington may lose its chance to participate in the greatest advance in international justice in the last 50 years.**

Nor did it help matters when, this summer, Helms introduced a bill known as the "American Service Members Protection Act." This legislation aims to deprive the administration of what little room remains for negotiating with the ICC by forbidding any U.S. involvement with the court unless the Senate first ratifies the treaty.

In light of such obstacles, Scheffer can be seen as a victim of daunting circumstances and the ambivalence of an administration that has made brave proclamations on human rights issues (think Rwanda, East Timor, or Sierra Leone), only to back down at the first sign of opposition. Still, that may be letting him off too lightly, for Scheffer himself has been less than successful as a tactician.

For one thing, the ambassador's somewhat dogged style has never provided much fire to his mission. Worse, since Rome, Scheffer has adopted a dangerously rigid posture, warning that when the ICC delegates meet again on November 27, it will be the world's last chance. "If this opportunity is allowed to wither or is flatly rejected, then the opportunity to bring the U.S. on board as a friendly ally to this court will probably be lost," he said.

In talks leading up to the coming showdown, Scheffer has also offered other nations too little in exchange for emasculating their court. Washington has promised to become a "good neighbor" if it gets what it wants—providing logistical, technical, and possibly financial aid (although without ratifying the treaty). Implicit in this, however, is the threat that, if the court


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doesn't back down, the U.S. will become a bad neighbor. Pace calls this a tough sell: "It's like saying we won't hammer your foot if you give this to us." Nor is this just a matter of temporary brinksmanship. An American defeat now will foreclose U.S. participation in the court for the foreseeable future, whoever the next U.S. president is. As Bruce Broomhall of the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights explains, "If he continues to push for an all-or-nothing exemption, which he won't get, and then walks away, it will be much harder for any future administration to return to the court. The administration shouldn't have limited its options. This will only lead to eventual embarrassment."

But the U.S. exemption will still likely be rejected. Says Dicker: "If the U.S. government thinks otherwise, they have a big surprise coming." And according to Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's foreign minister and a main proponent of the ICC, "[The Americans] have to ... recognize that they are not going to get an exemption from this court." By holding fast in the face of such statements and by rejecting other, more flexible fixes, Scheffer has ensured a major showdown. Whichever side backs down now will lose face, making compromise improbable.

## End Game

Domestic politics aside, the Clinton administration's decision to let the military scupper its support for the ICC was a tragic mistake. The international court holds the potential to reinforce current efforts—like those now underway in Sierra Leone—that are central to U.S. interests and international security. The court would also serve as a powerful deterrent, making heads of state less likely to abuse their citizens in the first place. America's allies and over a hundred other countries—many of them, like Israel, extremely suspicious of international law—have long since figured that out and thrown their weight behind the court.

To make matters worse, U.S. opposition was not a foregone conclusion. The administration could have employed several powerful arguments had it chosen to confront rather than co-opt the ICC's American critics. For one thing, numerous protections have been written into the Court's statutes, including a provision that guarantees the U.S. the right of first refusal to investigate any alleged crime by an American. Given the Pentagon's relatively good record of prosecuting past excesses, such as the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, there's no reason to think that the ICC would ever need to step in.

The court's charter also provides for a substantial appeal process through which a country like the United States could challenge an investigation it felt was politically biased. And Washington would likely win any such an appeal. Overwhelmingly powerful, the U.S. dominates the international scene and has had great success in bending multilateral institutions to its will.

More moderate critics still caution that an international criminal court might actually undermine the cause of justice by making tyrants and war criminals less likely to resign from office than in the past, when they could first ensure their own immunity. But this criticism is also flawed. It ignores the fact that such immunity is already largely a thing of the past—with or without an international criminal court.

Gone are the days when autocrats could hand the reins to a crony and then safely retire to a villa on the French Riviera (à la Haiti's Duvaliers). Already, many former top officials—ranging from Chile's Augusto Pinochet to members of Argentina's deposed junta to Khmer Rouge commanders in Cambodia—face prosecution of one sort or another. The ICC will only enhance a trend that is already becoming well-established. Moreover, as Milosevic's surprise October 7 resignation made clear, dictators don't opt to resign; they are pushed out against their will. The ICC is not likely to play a role in their retirement planning, for such figures rarely plan to retire. Once things went sour for Milosevic, for example, he no longer had any say in the matter, immunity or no immunity.

Yet the Administration never bothered to make use of these arguments for the court. Nor did Clinton use his bully pulpit to that end, despite the remarkable success with which he has wielded it in similar contentious cases (such as securing support for permanent normal trade relations with China).

Still, despite the strident objections from these shores, the ICC will soon be up and running. Sixty ratifications are needed before the court comes to life, but the current total is expected to hit 30 by the end of the year and momentum is growing. Observers predict that the critical mass will be reached in 2003. Yet it now looks extremely unlikely that America will participate in the court any time soon. This will deprive the fledgling tribunal of its greatest potential ally and give the lie to declared U.S. support for international law. The costs of Washington's choice will be high: for international justice, for the victims of war criminals who will go unpunished, and for the entire web of international norms and institutions that will be undermined by another American abstention from a key body (remember the fate of the League of Nations). Only the Sankohs and Milosevics of the world will be better off. ●


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# Finding The Civil Service's Hidden Sex Appeal

*Why the brightest young people shy away from government*

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

THE COVER OF A BROCHURE GIVEN out by the federal Office of Personnel Management shows a young man in sunglasses crouching like a surfer and holding a model spaceship labeled "United States." The brochure bellows "Look Ma! I'm a Bureaucrat!" in a funky yellow font and notes that the cover model, Dan Ridge, is the 24-year-old program director of the computer crime division at NASA. He "wears jeans to the office" and "uses supercomputing technology to protect NASA's worldwide computer system." The brochure goes on to profile more hip young people working in the public sector, including the new, fast-paced, reinvented government. The message: If you're young, ambitious, and looking to make a difference helping other people and the country, you too can be like Dan Ridge!

But if you call NASA to ask Ridge about his wonderful government job, you'll have some trouble finding him. Turns out he left town not long after posing for the brochure. Now he develops supercomputing technology called Beowulf clusters for Scyld, a startup company in Maryland. He didn't leave because he wanted more money—he's earning about the same amount now—or because he didn't like his job. He left because there just wasn't anywhere to move up to without sticking around for another 10 years. "My work was fantastic. I loved it. But it was clear that there was no further path for advancement."

Ridge's complaint is all too familiar. Despite the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) efforts, time still seems to move more slowly inside the federal government than outside: It takes longer to get hired, it's nearly impossible to get fired, and the promotional fast track moves like molasses compared to the private sector. Although that has been true for at least a century, the problem is getting worse. The private sector has vastly improved at scooping up talented young people, the call to service rings less loudly for young people today, and the civil service seems specifically designed to repel anyone born after about 1970.

The government's recruitment shortcomings threaten to become a national crisis. The flood of people who entered the federal government in the '60s and '70s is getting ready to start collecting social security, and there's a thin bench ready either to replace them or to move up the ranks. Sixty-five percent of the Senior Executive Service, the government's most elite managers, will be eligible to retire by 2004, and only about five percent of the civil service is under 30. That doesn't mean they will all leave, but according to a recent National Academy of Public Administration report, "the flow of high-quality new hires in federal departments and agencies has decreased dramatically while the average age of workers has risen."

It's not time to flee to Canada, but civil-service reform should be an urgent priority for the next administration. The government needs talented new recruits for the sake of people who drink tap water, drive the highways, or buy securities; and the potential consequences of the looming exodus are unnerving. Clinton and Gore should be applauded for making government reinvention a priority, but they didn't shake up the rules in a way that would significantly attract young people. They improved procurement, and they made the government smaller; but they didn't scour the agencies to determine where people are plotting innovative policy solutions, and where they are simply plotting their next conference trips to Maui.

That's a shame because what's going to pull bright young people in won't be a shrunken bureaucracy, or even higher salaries, but a civil service where they can find exciting and useful jobs with real responsibility and high ceilings—just what Dan Ridge wanted.

## Kids Today

According to a recent study by Paul Light of the Brookings Institution, the percentage of students from



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top graduate schools of public policy and management—the folks most likely to be interested in government careers—who go on to work for government has dropped from 76 percent in 1974 to 55 percent in 1988 to 49 percent today, with state, local, and federal government all losing their appeal. The percentage of master's graduates from Syracuse's Maxwell School and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government who actually pursue the careers their schools were designed for has plunged by 50 percent over two decades.

From the inside, the numbers look equally grim. The percentage of Presidential Management Interns who stay in government, the young people on the fastest possible track into the civil service, is stuck at 50 percent; the number of applications to the White House Fellows program has sunk. According to the National Association for Law Placement, the percentage of law school graduates going into the government has declined slowly but steadily for 25 years, from about 20 percent to 13 percent in 1998. If government were a stock, everybody would be selling it short.

These trends in government service partly reflect the generational shift in attitudes toward government itself. Young people don't much trust government, and they don't vote in high numbers. According to a 30-year study of freshman attitudes by Alexander Astin at UCLA, the percentage of students who say that they "want to keep up to date with political affairs" has skidded from above 50 percent in the late '60s and early '70s to below 30 percent today.

But this withdrawal doesn't come, as many critics of Generation X argue, simply because recent graduates are too busy dreaming about hundred-dollar bills, thousand-dollar suits, and million-dollar homes. In Astin's study, for example, the percentage of students who consider it critical to be "very well off financially" has famously risen from just under 40 percent in 1970 to 74 percent today. But the percentage was even higher in 1986. Plus, there are some trends moving in the direction of civic engagement: The number of young people who perform some sort of volunteer work is at an all-time high and, according to Light's study of graduates from public management schools, only 17 percent said that salary was a very important consideration for their first job. Eighty percent cited the opportunity to do challenging work.

The real reason young people have withdrawn from government is that government has developed a reputation as a place where the wheels spin endlessly and great ideas are filed away into a bottomless heap of paper. According to Greg Wright, a young Stanford honors graduate who wants to work for the government eventually, but went from college to a consulting group and a dot-com instead of joining a dot-gov: "I want to make as big a splash as I can. Government keeps you in the kiddy pool unless you know someone, have a lot of money, or you have been working in the basement for 20 years."

## Executive Insufficiency

Wright's attitude shouldn't be surprising considering that the men who have dominated the federal government for the past 25 years have all treated it with something between lukewarm praise and outward hostility. Ronald Reagan set the tone in his inaugural address—"Government is not the solution to our problem. It is the problem!"—and then placed a team of anti-bureaucrats at OPM. Led by Donald Devine, OPM seemed to strangle recruitment efforts, terminating, for example, all promotional material for VISTA, the Great Society program that sent young people into poor areas to teach and work. One OPM official, Terry Cutler, wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* in 1986, "Government's goal should not be employee excellence but employee sufficiency."

Reagan's rhetoric wasn't an anomaly. Every president since Jimmy Carter has come to office by swinging at the bureaucratic bugbear. Clinton's most famous line is "The era of big government is over," and Gore began his report on reinventing government with this zinger: "The federal government is not simply broke; it is broken." Gore's criticism was in the context of useful suggestions for change, but neither that, nor his repeated boasts about how much the government has shrunk in the past eight years, are quite as good an invitation to service as: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

The recruitment problems aren't simply a failure of rhetoric from the top; they're also a failure of execution in the middle. When Wright was a college senior, the consulting group he eventually joined socked his campus newspaper full of ads every day, interviewed him twice, and then flew him to L.A. for a dream weekend complete with a Mustang convertible. Government recruitment was nowhere to be seen, and if Greg had called its toll-free job line he would have been met by an awkward robotic voice blurting out an endless stream of nearly incomprehensible job numbers. If he had called the Smithsonian Institution, for example, he would have been encouraged to listen to a tutorial on the endless codes, terms, and processes necessary to apply, including "the definition of important technical terms you will need to understand to become a competitive applicant."

To be sure, Al Gore's reinvented government has begun to clean these problems up, and job postings are


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now available through an extensive Web site. But even these efforts have fallen short—in no small part because the federal personnel workforce, the people in charge of recruitment, has declined by 20 percent from 1991 to 1998.

## The Civil Service

Although you wouldn't know it from the toll-free job-hunt line, government can still be a great place to work. And this is where federal public relations efforts really fall short. Rarely do you hear, for instance, that the percentage of federal employees reporting that they are satisfied with their jobs is higher than the comparable number in the private sector, according to a 1999 Reinventing Government survey. For example, Jason Goldwater, a 30-year-old employee of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), has spent the last two years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and HCFA designing a common data set of Medicaid users—data that will vastly improve our ability to track the incidence of health problems like asthma. He loves his job both because it's exciting and because, "when I go home, I want to think about what I've done, not just a paycheck." Martin Yeung, 25, left investment banking to join the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and now works there as assistant to the deputy director of management. That may sound boring, but Yeung has got a great job and he loves his work. The OMB controls how legislation across the government is implemented—from airline safety regulation to federally financed student loans—and sits consistently in the middle of conflicts between agencies, the White House, and Congress. According to Yeung, "It's as fast as 'The West Wing'; it's bare knuckles; it's Olympic wrestling. The only way to outmaneuver opponents is to be on top of everything."

**Dan Ridge, pictured above, joined a computer start up not long after posing for this brochure touting the value of a government career.**

But there aren't enough great jobs like Yeung's and Goldwater's and, unfortunately, far too many young people get stuck in boring ones and leave before they can find real job satisfaction. Out of college, I entered a fellowship program with about 40 other graduates interested in public service careers. We all got jobs with the federal government and lived together in Washington. None of us stayed more than two years. The only two people continuing the work they started with were the only two who didn't join the civil service but instead went to work for Congress.

Government simply deserves part of its bad reputation. The federal civil service remains locked in a structure built in the early 1880s after a disaffected job seeker assassinated James Garfield because so many jobs had been doled out through the patronage system. The solution then was to essentially put the civil service in a lock box. Federal employees are guaranteed stability and consistent, slow promotions—from GS-13 to GS-14 after two years and so on. They can't get fired except through a torturous review process.

This means that the main way to open up jobs is to create new ones, instead of clearing out old ones. And, in the anti-bureaucratic fervor of the past 20 years, that has been nearly impossible. According to Fred Smith, a deputy assistant secretary of defense who has spent his whole career working for the country: "It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to hire anyone from the outside. We've had maybe four young people come in this year, and all were from the Presidential Management Internship program." Smith has only been able to fire one person in 22 years, and what happened then is instructive. "I tried for three years but two weeks before the process worked through, he chose early retirement and took a $25,000 bonus," said Smith.

In addition, the rules of the civil service don't just block job openings; they also create a bureaucratic mentality that encourages survival over innovation. Agency funding gets renewed every year, even if the work has become obsolete, as long as it can stay below Congress' radar. Salary and rank are based on the number of people supervised, not on the amount of work accomplished. Lastly, once you've left government it's very hard to come back in, a policy that prevents conflicts of interest but also blocks out innovative employees who wanted to step out for a few years and learn about another business culture. In the 1999 government survey of federal employees, only 33 percent said that creativity and innovation were rewarded by the government.

This system limits political meddling and provides

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safe harbor for saintly civil servants who have been quietly serving for years, but it also makes the civil service singularly unappealing to this generation of young people. In part because of the booming economy and the tremendous opportunities for growth in information technology, this has become the "free agent generation." As Aparna Mohan, a Presidential Management Intern working at the Agency for International Development, says, "Our goal is to have the career be the sum of all the jobs we've had—not to just get one job and make it a whole career."

In short, the advantages of government employment—long-term stability and structure—are the last things that young people seem to care about. The average member of the elite Senior Executive Service, for example, has been working in government for 23 years, more than a lifetime for today's graduates; the average 32-year-old has already worked for nine different companies and is looking around to bounce to a few more. Government just doesn't seem to offer the new thing. As Phil Keisling, the former secretary of state of Oregon and now a vice president at PROdx, a Portland internet consulting firm, puts it, "The rate of change curve is just steeper in the private sector relative to government and the gap is widening."

## Uncle Sam Needs You

The government's talent shortage should worry us all. Government employees research asthma at the CDC; they keep planes from crashing at the FAA; and they're the ones who decide when it's safe to set off Forest Service-controlled burns near your house.

Moreover, without top young talent, government is no match for the private sector it is supposed to regulate. Corporations that don't want to pay taxes hire lawyers who compete with the IRS. Mining companies that don't want to pay royalties hire smart lawyers who work wonders with federal law. The government is now entering a critical high-stakes battle with the private sector to see who controls the patents to our DNA. Does anyone really want first-rate people on the corporate side and second-rate people on the public's side?

In addition, a great deal of government work is now contracted out—from the administration of welfare programs to the management of private prisons. But contracting work out doesn't preclude the need for smart people in government: You still need smart people to make sure that the public isn't sold a bill of goods. Many of the security problems at the Los Alamos nuclear laboratory in New Mexico, for example, weren't just caused by the Department of Energy, but rather by lax oversight from the University of California at Berkeley, the main contractor running the lab.

This isn't to say that there's something bad about working for corporate America and the private sector. We're lucky that Henry Ford didn't work for the Department of Commerce, just as we're lucky that executives like IBM's Lou Gerstner and private inventors like Linus Torvalds are improving the ways that America runs. The growth of our private businesses is a primary reason for the current economic boom and its bounties.

The problem is one of balance. A society in which every ambitious environmentalist goes to work for the EPA or a nonprofit would fall apart because there would be no one to help develop non-polluting effluent systems or to argue internally for the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions. A society in which every ambitious environmentalist goes to work for McKinsey and GE would fall apart because there would be no one to write the regulations and to test pollution levels. Unfortunately, we seem to be shifting to the latter.

## Give Youth A Chance

The obvious solution to attracting better people to government is to pay them more. Money does help bring people into government, particularly if targeted to those who need it most, like OPM Director Janice Lachance's recent initiative to allow agencies to pay back student loans as part of the government's often-invoked program to provide relocation, retention, and recruitment bonuses. But even that seems unlikely to reverse current trends. Government will never be able to pay as much as the private sector, no matter how much it tinkers on the margins of federal salary structures. To improve recruitment it needs to rely on its prime advantage: the ability to allow young people to serve others with useful work. According to Lily Batchelder, a 28-year-old law school student who has worked both for a consulting group and the Justice Department: "The problems you try to solve working in government are complex and fascinating. Working in a place where you are focused on profit is like going to a good action movie. It can be fun, but it doesn't hit your soul."

Whether you work in the State Department or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, you have the clear chance to make other people's lives better. This is a powerful incentive, and it's the prime reason that government still attracts as much talent as it does. But the potential to do good doesn't mean much if you can't actually do anything. An idealist who joins an organization only to find her work stifled by rules, regulations, and a boss who comes in at noon, won't stay an idealist for long. If Lily Batchelder finds herself in an agency


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that's spinning its wheels, she won't stay a government employee for long.

What government needs to do is to improve the ratio of useful to useless work that new employees can do. Fortunately, there are examples right in government—like the White House, the one place in Washington where young people always seem to want to work. In fact, the draw is such that more than 10 million people watch the television program "The West Wing" weekly. They don't watch because they can see the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management cross wires. They watch because they can see young people who struggle with moral dilemmas, move quickly, and make everything from the Census to potential war, seem interesting.

**"The OMB is as fast as 'The West Wing;' it's bare knuckles; it's Olympic wrestling."**

In the Clinton White House, similarly, no rules lock employees into place or scuttle promotions, and the days move as quickly as in any dot-com. George Stephanopolous, Rahm Emanuel, and Gene Sperling rose to the top of the hierarchy on plain merit, not because they spent 16 years in the basement of the Interior Department. According to 25-year-old-speechwriter Joshua Gottheimer, who joined the White House after college and a brief stint scooping ice cream at Ben and Jerry's: "There's no defined hierarchy based on age. If you are willing to work hard and put in the hours, you can do almost anything."

In part, the advantage the White House has is that the stakes are higher. It's often only when the work becomes less important that strict hierarchies cement themselves into place. The greatest opportunities for young people in the government came during the New Deal and New Frontier, when they were needed to push forward ambitious and innovative new programs. Even during the arms race, young people were frequently promoted into positions of power. According to James Woolsey, who joined the SALT I negotiating team at age 27 and was counsel to the Senate Armed Services Committee before he turned 30: "Any time there is something brand new like arms control, there are opportunities for young people. The bureaucracy isn't entrenched yet."

The Department of Justice has similar success by placing few limits on the kind of work you can do when you come to it. At the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington, D.C., for example, everyone enters a four-year program that throws them into the middle of important and exciting cases. On Capitol Hill the story is the same. Staffers join their representatives knowing that they can't prepare for 30 years in government because their boss might be booted out in two. If a staff becomes stultified, it's likely their boss would soon be looking for new work.

In the rest of the federal government, the story's different. You can't come and go; you can't move around much; and frequently the good works that you planned to do bear no fruit. But there is hope. Even the Minerals Management Service can draw bright people in if reformed the right way. Consider Stephen Warren, the senior budget analyst of the chief financial officer of the District of Columbia, a city job that overlaps with the federal government which has final say over the city's budget. In a sense, Warren's job is just about looking over spreadsheets and developing revenue-collection models. But to Warren, a 28-year-old who worked for Marriott after graduating from Hampton University, it's an opportunity to improve the lives of the people around him. His proudest moment was when a revenue collection model he'd pored over for six months was approved by Congress, sending millions of dollars to the District. "You do a day's work. You can see something happening. You know, it makes you feel good," says Warren.

Warren didn't go into government thinking that he would be locked into a 30-year career with steady promotions and a group of deadwood co-workers. His boss when he started, Tony Williams, now Washington's mayor, "doesn't say that this is the last job you are going to have. He said that he wants this place to be a platform for young people to start their careers and do something good. If you choose to stay, you choose to stay."

Warren has been there for a bit more than four years and he plans to stay a little longer because he's learning, he's using his skills to serve people, and he's doing something important and useful without being stifled by bureaucracy. And, he adds, "when you come right out of school, you're not quite ready to turn your brain off."

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**http://arbiter.wipo.int/domains/decisions/html/d2000-0479.html**
**ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION**
**Tata Sons Limited v. D & V Enterprises Case No. D2000-0479**
**Re: Pornographic Web site - www.bodacious-tatas.com**

a) Domain Name "Identical or Confusingly Similar"

It is clear to the Panel that an integral part of the Domain Name registered by the Respondent in this case, namely "tatas," is confusingly similar, and almost identical, to the Complainant's TM TATA. It is true, of course, that the Respondent, in its Domain Name registration, has used "tata" plus the addition of the letter "s" whilst the Complainant's trademark has no "s." This, however, is of no benefit to the Respondent. In the Complainant's submission, which is amply substantiated by copies of articles and reports submitted (see: Complaint - Annexures "E" and "F") the Tata Group of Companies is collectively referred to as "Tatas" throughout the world.

One might think, nevertheless, that the inclusion of the word "bodacious" in the domain name registered by the Respondent, taken together with the addition of the letter "s" to TATA, could create a sufficient distinction, for trademark purposes, between the Complainant's TM TATA, on the one hand, and the Respondent's Domain Name on the other. Such a contention, however, is untenable in the view of the Panel, by virtue of the very high level of goodwill that both TATA and TATAS have acquired. Further, TATA, without any vestige of doubt, constitutes a famous (or, in international parlance, well known) mark - a subject to which the Panel will return.

...

It must be said, also, that it is now generally accepted in most countries that well-known marks, particularly those surrounded by an aura of high repute, excellent quality and respectability, deserve wide protection. This the Panel holds to be the case with the TM TATA and its corresponding service mark. In this area, therefore, the addition of a word like "bodacious" ["South Midland and Southern U.S.-1."thorough"; "blatant"; "unmistakable"; 2."remarkable"; "outstanding"; 3. "audacious"; "bold"; "brazen" - "Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language": (1989)], and the addition of the letter "s", does not render the Domain Name less identical or less confusingly similar to a trade or service mark. Indeed, the opposite is true, particularly when one considers most of the meanings attributed to the word "bodacious."



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# Reach Out And Annoy Someone

*When public space turns private, we're all stuck listening to the noise*

BY JONATHAN ROWE

IN THE LATTER 1990S, IN THE MIDST OF the high tech boom, I spent a lot of time in a coffee shop in the theater district in San Francisco. It was near Union Square, the tourist hub, and I observed a scene play out there time and time again. Mom is nursing her mocha. The kids are picking at their muffins, feet dangling from their chairs. And there's Dad, pulled back slightly from the table, talking into his cell phone.

I would watch the kids' faces, vacant and a little forlorn, and wonder what happens to kids whose parents aren't there even when they are. How can we expect kids to pay attention if we are too busy to pay attention to them? Peter Breggin, the psychiatrist, says much "attention deficit disorder" is really "dad deficit disorder." Maybe he's right.

As I sat there, I would think, too, about the disconnect between the way we talk about the economy in the U.S. and the way we actually experience it. The media were enthusing daily about the nation's record "expansion," and here were these kids staring off into space. It was supposed to be a "communications revolution," and yet here, in the technological epicenter, the members of this family were avoiding one another's eyes.

With technology in particular, we can't seem to acknowledge the actual content of our economic experience; and we discuss the implications only within a narrow bandwidth of human concern. Is there a health risk? Might the thing cause cancer? That's about it with cell phones, computers, genetic engineering, and a host of other new developments. As a result, we must await the verdict of the doctors to find out whether we are permitted to have qualms or reservations. Jacob Needleman, the contemporary philosopher, says that we Americans are "metaphysically repressed," and the inability to discuss the implications of technology—except in bodily or stock market terms—is a case in point.

I don't discount the significance of cancer. But there is something missing from a discussion that can't get beyond the most literal and utilitarian concerns. Actually, some of the problems with cell phones aren't at all squishy or abstract. If you've been clipped by a car tooling around the corner while the driver sits gabbing, cell phone in hand, then you are aware of this. The big problem, of course, is the noise. For sheer intrusiveness, cell phones rank with mega-amp car stereoes and political commercials, and they are harder to escape.

We all know the drill. First the endearing beep, which is like an alarm clock going off at 5:30 a.m. Then people shout into the things, as though they are talking across the Cross Bronx Expressway. It's become a regular feature at movies and ball games, restaurants and parks. I've heard the things going off in men's room stalls. They represent more than mere annoyances. Cell phones affect life in ways that are, I suspect, beyond the capacity of the empirical mind to grasp.

Travel is an example. Thomas Carlyle once advised Anthony Trollope to use travel as a time to "sit still and label his thoughts." For centuries, travel played this quiet role. I have a hunch that the eloquence and depth of this nation's founders had partly to do with their mode of travel. Madison, Jefferson, and the others had that long ride to Philadelphia in which to sort out their thoughts and work over their sentences in their minds. There was time in which thought could expand; we can hear the echoes today in the spaciousness and considered quality of such documents as the *Federalist Papers*—a quality that political argument today rarely achieves.

In more recent times, trains have served as a link to that kind of travel. I used to look forward to Amtrak rides almost as a sanctuary. They provided precious hours in which to work or read or simply muse without the interruptions of the telephone and office. But

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now, cell phones have caught up with me. They have turned Amtrak into a horizontal telephone booth; on a recent trip to New York my wife and I were besieged by cell phones and their cousins, high-powered Walkmen, literally on all sides. The trip, which used to be a pleasure, has become one long headache.

I wrote the president of Amtrak to tell him this. I tried to be constructive. There is a real opportunity here for Amtrak to get ahead of the curve, I said. Why not provide "Quiet Cars" the way they provided No Smoking cars when smoking first became an issue? Amtrak could give riders a choice, which is what America is supposed to be about—and which Amtrak's main competitors, the airlines, cannot do. This seemed like a no-lose proposition. The yakkers could yak, others could enjoy the quiet, and Amtrak could have a PR coup. (In a just world, the cell phoners would have to sit together in Noise Cars, but I was trying to be accomodating.)

**Secondhand noise is going to become a bigger issue in the next decade than secondhand smoke was in the last.**

The argument seemed pretty convincing. As the weeks passed, I imagined my letter circulating at the highest levels. Perhaps I'd even be called in as a consultant. Now that I have the reply, I'm not holding my breath. But the reasons that Amtrak offered for inaction are worth a few moments, since they suggest how quickly a technology invokes its own system of rationalization.

For example, the letter said that Amtrak does not want to inconvenience the "responsible" users of cell phones. That's typical; try to isolate a few aberrant users and so legitimate the rest. But cell phones are like cigarettes in this respect—they are intrusive when used normally, as intended. They beep like a seat belt warning, or play a tinny melody like a musical toilet seat. People usually shout into them. They produce secondhand noise, just as cigarettes produce secondhand smoke; and from the standpoint of the forced consumer of this noise, the only responsible use is non-use.

Then the letter turned the issue upside down. "We hesitate to restrict responsible users of cell phones," it said, "especially since many customers find train travel to be an ideal way to get work done." But that is exactly why cell phones should be restricted—because many travelers are trying to get work done. For one thing, the notion that people are busily working on cell phones is New Economy hype. I have been a coerced eavesdropper on more conversations than I could count. I have listened to executives gab about their shopping hauls and weekend conquests. I once had to endure, between Philadelphia and New York, an extended brag from an associate sports agent regarding the important people he was meeting. It is not often that I hear anyone actually discussing work.

But more importantly, consider the assumption here. We have two people who arguably are trying to get some work done. There's the cell phone user, who wants to make noise. And there's myself (and probably numerous others), who would appreciate a little quiet. Why does the noise automatically take precedence over the quiet? Why does the polluter get first dibs on the air?

This is where the trail starts to get warm, I think. There is something about technology that enables it to take front seat in any situation it enters; which is to say, there is something in ourselves that seeks to give it this seat. A Maine essayist by the name of John Gould once noted this about the ordinary telephone. He was up on his roof one day when his wife called to him about something. "Later," he said, "Can't you see I'm working?" Later came, and this time the phone rang. Gould scrambled down the ladder in a frantic attempt to get to that phone.

Afterwards he reflected upon what had happened. His wife could wait, he thought, but the phone rang with the authority of Mussolini in a bad mood. Most of us probably have had this experience. We've been making a purchase when the phone rang and the clerk dropped us cold and got into a long conversation on the phone. Or perhaps we had a visitor in our own office and interrupted the conversation to pick up the phone. Whatever is happening, the telephone comes first. Call waiting ratchets up the authority structure like a dictatorship that adds minions at the top. Now there are intrusions upon the intrusions; how many of us hear that click and think, "Oh, just let it ring."

What is it about these things that makes us so obedient, and so oblivious to that which lies outside them—such as actual people? I once asked a man who was bellowing into a cell phone in the coffee shop in San Francisco why he was talking so loudly. A bad connection, he said. It had not crossed his mind that anything


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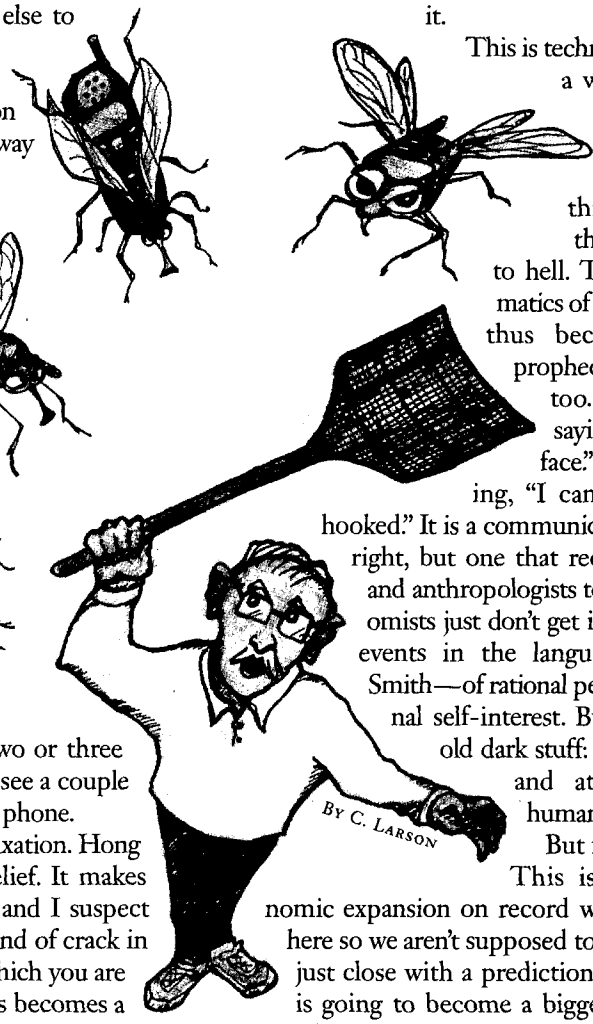
else mattered at that moment. Like computers and television, cell phones pull people into their own psychological polar field, and the pull is strong. I've watched people complete a conversation, start to put the thing away, and then freeze. They sit staring at it, as though trying to think of someone else to call. The phone is there. It demands to be used, almost the way a cigarette demands to be smoked. Does the person own the cell phone, or is it the other way around?

And what does that suggest about where this "communications revolution" is taking us? When I was in Hong Kong a year and a half ago, it was becoming a cell-phone hell. The official statistics said there was one phone for every two people, but it often felt like two for one. They were everywhere; the table scenes in the splendid food courts in the high rise malls were San Francisco to the second or third power. At a table with four people, two or three might be talking on the phone. You'd see a couple on a date, and one was talking on the phone.

In a way I could understand the fixation. Hong Kong is crowded almost beyond belief. It makes parts of Manhattan feel like Kansas, and I suspect that a cell phone offers an escape, a kind of crack in space. It is an entrance to a realm in which you are the center of attention, the star. Access becomes a status symbol in itself. A lawyer friend of mine there described the new ritual at the start of business meetings. Everyone puts their cell phone on the conference table, next to their legal pad, almost like a gun. My power call against yours, *gweilo* (Chinese for foreigner; literally "ghost"). The smallest ones are the most expensive, and therefore have the most status.

In places like Hong Kong, moreover, most people live in cramped quarters, which means consumption must take less space consuming forms. That's all understandable. To a lesser degree, such considerations apply in places such as Washington and New York.

There is something lonely about a wired world. The more plugged in everyone else is the more we feel we have to be there too. But then effect becomes cause. The very thing that pulls us away from live public spaces begins to make those spaces uninhabitable. It is the pollution of the aural commons, the enclosure of public space by giant telecommunications firms, and the result is to push us all towards private space—if we can afford it.




This is technological Reaganism, a world in which personal desires are all that matters and to hell with everything else. So everything else starts to go to hell. The libertarian dogmatics of the computer crowd thus become self-fulfilling prophecies. But there's this, too. Not only are they saying, "Get out of my face." They are also saying, "I can't stop myself. I'm hooked." It is a communications revolution all right, but one that requires psychologists and anthropologists to understand. Economists just don't get it. They couch these events in the language of Locke and Smith—of rational people seeking a rational self-interest. But in reality it's the old dark stuff: the vagrant passions and attachments of the human heart.

But forgive me. I forgot. This is the longest economic expansion on record we are talking about here so we aren't supposed to get too deep. So I'll just close with a prediction. Secondhand noise is going to become a bigger issue in the next decade than secondhand smoke was in the last. It will be part of the big second wave of environmentalism—the fight against cognitive pollution, the despoiling of the aural and visual commons, whether by cell phones and walkmen or by advertising everywhere.

It's going to be a wrenching battle, but I predict at least one early victory. Quiet cars on Amtrak within five years. Meanwhile, I have my eye on a company in Israel, called NetLine Technologies, that makes small portable devices to block cell phones. Technically, they are illegal, and I doubt that more technology ultimately is the answer. But they do raise a useful question. If some people can use technology to pollute the air we share, why can't other people use technology to clean it up again? ●

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# Reinventing The Wheel

## *Transition lessons for the president elect*

BY JOE DEMPSEY

ON APRIL 19, 1993, OFFICIALS FROM the Federal Bureau of Investigation charged into the Waco, Texas compound of the Branch Davidian cult, smashed down walls, and filled the building with tear gas. Rather than flushing out messianic leader David Koresh and his followers, though, the raid set off a chain reaction of explosions in the group's weapons storehouse. Before the fires were finally extinguished, more than 80 people—including 17 children under the age of 10—had perished. The tragic events at Waco set off a militia movement across the country that would dog the government for years to come.

During the eventual post mortem on the events of that day, researchers examined everything from the tear gas canisters to the FBI leadership to the behavior of the Davidians themselves. But one aspect of the fiasco that has gone largely unnoted is the impact of the fledgling presidency of Bill Clinton. The Waco disaster came just three months into Clinton's tenure, at a time when the White House was in serious disarray. Poor planning after the election had left key White House jobs unfilled, and Clinton had appointed a slew of advisers—as well as an attorney general—who were foreign to Washington and barely knew how to get their mail delivered, much less manage the sprawling federal bureaucracy.

When he ordered the assault on Waco, Clinton didn't know, for instance, that the same man who was leading the charge, Richard Rogers, had commanded the FBI forces at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Those forces killed the unarmed wife of white supremacist Randy Weaver. And Clinton consulted with Attorney General Janet Reno—a former Dade County, Florida prosecutor—for only 15 minutes about her decision, seemingly oblivious to the action on the ground. According to *The New York Times*, Clinton "never explored the details of the plan or other options, entrusting the decision to an attorney general in office for only six weeks, and a director of the FBI who many believe he would like to force out."

The disaster at Waco should serve as a cautionary tale for the next occupant of the White House, and not only for what it says about handling radical fringe groups. It shows the importance of learning how to get a grip on the federal government that you're supposed to be running in January. And that's just one thing the president-elect will have to take care of during the 73 days between Election Day and the inauguration, along with assembling his team, setting his agenda, mapping out a $1.8 billion budget blueprint, and learning what the nuclear codes are.

The Waco debacle also suggests that if the next president is looking for a role model to emulate during his fledgling presidential term, he would be wise to avoid Clinton. Carter, too, wouldn't be much help. In fact, Al Gore or George W. Bush would be well served to repeat this mantra should they get elected: Be like Reagan. The Gipper may have thought ketchup was a vegetable, and his economic voodoo would create a decade-long debt crisis, but he was able to move smoothly into the White House and, with the help of seasoned aides like James Baker and James Brady, reassure the public that he was in control. His transition wasn't perfect, but it does provide more positive lessons than those of the two Democratic governors who occupied the office on the bookends of Reagan and Bush's 12-year reign.

Both Carter and Clinton came to the presidency without Washington experience. Though they'd tapped into enough of the public's concerns to carry a national election, neither was quite ready for the White House. They hadn't faced off with Congress; they lacked experience in the federal bureaucracy, and they were accustomed to the administrative intimacies of the smaller states they'd governed—places where they could bump into a cabinet secretary in the cafeteria and run into constituents on the street every

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morning. Worse, neither Carter nor Clinton tapped a strong chief of staff with federal government experience to compensate for their own lack of experience inside the Beltway. A competent chief of staff is critical to breaking up the logjam, queuing up those waiting at your door, and helping the new president figure out the movements of the bureaucracy. In the beginning, Carter tried to get by without a chief of staff at all, while Clinton appointed a trusted friend who didn't know the White House.

And it cost them. While both Carter and Clinton brought good policies to the White House, and had later successes, they both accomplished far less than they could have if they'd gotten off to good starts. With Clinton the point is particularly clear: His greatest accomplishment has been the success of his economic policies, not coincidentally the one part of his administration's plan that he was able to set off on the right foot. He carefully considered top economic appointees and organized a pre-inaugural conference in Little Rock where he showed a keen understanding of economic policy. The rest of his transition was chaotic; many of his later appointments were made haphazardly, and he soon lost the faith of the public—setting the stage for later stumbles that plagued his first years in office. Fortunately the mistakes he made, as with similar mistakes made by Carter, are the kind the next president can learn from. Those lessons might save him from leaving his press secretary to stand at the podium saying "mistakes were made," as Clinton did.

**Carter and Clinton wanted to run the White House in their own styles—the lessons of the past be damned. Washington bit back.**

### The Peanut Gallery

Jimmy Carter became president by attacking Washington. Hewing to his roots as a peanut farmer, Carter shunned limousines, wore blue jeans, and banned the playing of "Hail to the Chief." You can run the country in Wranglers just as well as in an Armani suit. It's the substance of the candidate, not his appearance, that counts. But Carter not only dispensed with the Washington uniform, he scorned Washington's ways—even knocking the government itself. He wanted to run the White House with his own style; the lessons and traditions of the past be damned. Not surprisingly, Washington bit back.

Upon taking office, Carter made his first major error when, in an effort to avoid appearing as autocratic as Nixon had been, he decided to serve as his own chief of staff—ignoring the counsel of a few wise men from the outgoing administration who tried to warn him of the dangers inherent in failing to appoint someone with an iron fist and an insider's understanding of Washington.

When Carter officials visited Dick Cheney, Gerald Ford's chief of staff, during the 1976 transition, Cheney gave them a broken bicycle wheel to make his case for a strong chief of staff. Like Carter, Ford had initially embraced a more democratic organizational chart for the White House, coming up with the "bicycle wheel" model of presidential management. Senior officials were all granted equal status, like the spokes of a wheel that connect directly to the hub, or president.

The arrangement quickly collapsed because the presidency is just too complicated. Agency missions overlap, too many people have issues that *need* the president's attention, and without a set schedule, the commander in chief wastes precious time bouncing from one minor priority to the next. Nonetheless, Carter ignored the wheel and blundered ahead. The result was like a schoolyard soccer game, Carter advisor Harrison Wellford recalls. "Everybody runs to whatever ball is bouncing at the moment because everybody wants to get a piece of the action while they can," he says. Trying to direct his staff's energies toward policy development, Carter became a referee.

It didn't help matters that when taking office, Carter pledged to reduce the imperial status of the presidency by cutting 30 percent of White House staff. "[That's] something no one who has been in that kind of executive position would have done," Paul Light of the Brookings Institution says. Cutting staff isn't impossible, but it courts disaster when, like Carter and almost all of the people working for him, the people making the cuts haven't been around long enough to differentiate between Washington's administrative muscle and fat.

At the same time he was proposing to reduce the

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White House staff, Carter was proposing a sprawling agenda. Plans and schemes seemed to drop out of his shirt sleeves every time he turned around—from an immediate nuclear test ban to fuel saving measures to a universal $50 tax rebate. According to Wellford, "There was an effort to ... enshrine his campaign promises in a golden book that would define the objectives of the new [administration]."

Actually getting such an agenda past his shirt sleeves required some assistance from Congress, but Carter failed to realize that even Democratic legislators needed schmoozing before they would embrace the new president's to-do list. Not only did they forget the candy and flowers, Carter and his staff mis-

# Who's Who

IN THE INTERLOCK

In his new book *The Breach*, **Peter Baker** describes "a different approach" taken by **Bill Clinton**'s impeachment lawyers as they sought his acquittal. "Sitting on the Republican side of the chamber, some of the White House attorneys were regularly striking up conversation with the senators during breaks. **Strom Thurmond**, the ancient senator from South Carolina, kept sidling over to the defense table to flirt with **Nicole Seligman** and **Cheryl Mills**. "'How come you're so cute?' he would ask, then clutch one of their arms, 'I just love holding on to you,'" Baker writes.

In 1992, **Richard Holbrooke** co-chaired a commission that recommended that the White House be the "center for strategic planning" for national security, domestic policy, and economic policy formulation. Our pal **Al Kamen** wonders how Holbrooke feels about that recommendation now that he seems slated to land outside the White House as Secretary of State.

Kamen, by the way, also reports that doubts as to who would be formulating national security policy inside an **Al Gore** White House seemed removed last month when Gore's brain truster **Leon Fuerth** announced himself to 300 members of the Council on Foreign Relations as the "putative national security adviser."

**Arthur Laffer**, the father of **Ronald Reagan**'s supply-side economics who last year made *Time*'s list of "the century's 100 greatest minds," has, according to a company he sued, developed a lucrative "pattern and practice of preying on small cash-strapped companies by promising to sit on their boards of directors, reneging on his promise, and then suing to extort the stock he was to receive for his services." According to the *New York Observer*, "the economist has considerable leverage in the disputes because companies that eagerly announced his appointment to their boards are loath to lose the legitimacy his name brings and are ill-financed to fight his lawsuits."

You may have wondered why there suddenly appeared on the House floor a resolution condemning the Turkish massacre of Armenians, an event that, however lamentable, did after all take place 80 years ago. The explanation is that Republicans control the House and a Republican congressman, **James Rogan**, is in a closely contested race for reelection in a California district that happens to contain more than 20,000 registered voters of Armenian descent. "The fact this is of interest to his constituents is not lost on the leadership," Rep. **Thomas Davis**, head of the House Republican reelection committee told **Eric Schmitt** of *The New York Times*. "This resolution will be a very tangible debating point for him."

The resolution does seem to have set off a bit of a scramble, though, to hire top lobbyists. The Turks have hired former speaker designee **Bob Livingston**, former house appropriations committee member **Gerald Solomon**, and former representative and international specialist **Stephen Solarz**. The Armenians are countering with former representative and pundit **Susan Molinari**.

Livingston, Solomon, and Solarz are being paid a total of $1.8 million for their trouble, leading one to think that there might be another explanation for the resolution: Perhaps Davis just wants to do his little part to help bring down our trade deficit.

"Who's Who" hopes Al Gore wins, but we have to admit we will sorely miss what *The Washington Post*'s **Mike Allen** describes as **George W. Bush**'s "serial syntactical aberrations." Their number is impressive enough to warrant anthologizing by the web site of *ABC News* under the heading of "The English Patient." In case you missed


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treated the lions of Congress—critical allies since Democrats had nearly a two-to-one advantage in both the House and Senate in 1977. During his inauguration, for example, Carter failed to give choice tickets to Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill. Then, just three days into his administration, Carter awarded an ambassadorship-at-large to Elliott Richardson, one of O'Neill's Massachusetts Republican rivals. Afterwards, according to *Newsweek*, O'Neill admonished Hamilton Jordan, one of Carter's top advisers: "I don't think you understand, son. The next time you do this I'm going to kick your ass."

The lesson didn't sink in. Soon afterwards, without consulting the appropriate congressional representa-

them, the latest came when he proclaimed that "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully," and when commenting on **Gail Sheehy**'s allegation that he is an undiagnosed dyslexic, Bush said, "the woman who knew I had dyslexia, I never interviewed her."

Over the last decade, we have often reported on the interesting relationship between House Transportation Committee Chairman **Bud Shuster** and his former staffer and close friend **Ann Eppard**. Eppard, who was not supposed to lobby him for a year after she left her staff job to open a transportation lobbying firm, in fact, according to *The Washington Post*, "arranged for meetings between Schuster and her clients, regularly dined with the congressman and his clients, and frequently dropped by his office to introduce different clients before leaving, so they could discuss legislation with Schuster."

Among the goodies she showered on Schuster was a Christmas vacation trip to Puerto Rico, financed by two of Eppard's clients who paid for a four-bedroom villa for Shuster and his family. She was indicted for receiving "more than $200,000 from a lobbyist while she was serving as Schuster's chief of staff. She escaped with a fine of only $5,000. Schuster has not been indicted. But last month the House finally did take note of his transgressions which, by the way, included illegally spending "hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign funds on expensive restaurants and charter airplanes for personal rather than campaign use." So what did the House ethics committee do? It sent Schuster a letter of reproval. It is, according to *The New York Times*, "the mildest form of sanction the committee can mete out."

After the election comes a new book written by **Hillary Clinton** called *An Invitation to the White House*. *The New York Post* calls its researcher, **Cheryl Merser**, "as much as expert on sex as she is on the subtleties of state dinners." That's because in 1983, Merser published her own book, *Honorable Intentions*, which *The Washington Post* describes as "an '80s guide to love and romance with sexually explicit chapters."

As the election approached, even Republican pollsters like **Fred Luntz** and **Bill McInturff** were conceding that "the Senate, long thought to be safely in Republican hands, is up for grabs on Election Day," according to **Allison Stevens** of *The Hill*.

"I said I think three or four months ago that I thought Republicans were going to lose the House," Luntz told Stevens. "If I were to bet on it today, I'd say the GOP position in the House actually looks better than it did a few months ago but the Senate looks much worse than it did a couple of months ago."

One of the Senate races that now looks good for the Democrats is Minnesota, where a late Democratic primary had helped give Republican Sen. **Rod Grams** the early edge. Now **Tom Hamburger** of *The Wall Street Journal* reports that some pollsters think the Democratic nominee, department-store heir **Mark Dayton**, "has recently opened a substantial lead."

Recently, *The Washington Post*'s **Ceci Connolly** gave the Secret Service a bit of a heart attack on Air Force Two when she put her arm around the vice president's shoulder and held a plastic water pistol to his head. While Connolly claimed the incident was a joke, others saw it as a reflection of her well-known hostility to the Gore camp, according to the *Financial Times*.

Connolly has denied any bias against Gore, but she apparently made no bones about her feelings about the *Financial Times*. An incensed Connolly reportedly gave the *Times* staff a tongue lashing for daring to write about the behavior of reporters covering the campaign and for breaking the unspoken rule among the press that keeps its own dirty laundry private.

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tives, Carter attempted to slash funding for water projects in 17 states—a suicidal mission given Congress' dependence on pork. The measure angered representatives whose states benefited from the projects. Then the eventual compromise, which allowed funding for eight of those projects, angered environmental groups.

In a way, Carter wanted Washington to be like Georgia, but there's simply no way an executive can stay on top of all the ins and outs of the system as he can in a smaller state government. The president doesn't just have to oversee his own staff and the sprawling civil service; he's got to have enough of a handle on things that he can be instantly brought up to date with the State Department's policy toward Angola and the latest goings-on at the Department of Agriculture. Carter eventually realized this and appointed Jordan as his chief of staff, but by then, extensive damage had already been done.

To find a president who successfully managed the White House without a knowledgeable chief of staff, you have to go back to Franklin Roosevelt. In addition to having served as governor of New York, Roosevelt spent eight years as assistant secretary to the navy, giving him experience at the federal level where policy-making intersects with the civil service. Carter's limited experience in a smaller state left him well out of his league.

### Morning in America

Unlike Carter, Ronald Reagan learned from Ford's error and appointed an extremely competent chief of staff, James Baker, who had worked in the executive branch in Washington. The chief of staff holds the second most important job in the White House, and coming from outside of Washington, Reagan wisely appointed someone who could compensate for his own lack of federal experience. Baker then chose the quick-witted Richard Darman as his deputy.

Between them, Darman and Baker had worked in four important agencies: Commerce, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Defense. Reagan did give top positions to long-time friends and fellow Californians Ed Meese and Michael Deaver. But as long as Baker and Darman were around, *someone* always knew which bureaucratic buttons to push.

Beyond appointing veterans as his gatekeepers, Reagan also kept a sharp focus on a limited agenda. Unlike Carter, Reagan set a small group of core goals: increased defense spending, a smaller role for the federal government, and tax cuts. He made an early priority of decreasing spending by crafting a trim budget late in 1980 and submitting it to Congress about a month after his inaugural. Reagan also knew enough to assign key jobs early, and his staff appointments were staggered throughout his transition period, coming no later than three weeks before the inaugural. He thus kept the White House running smoothly and maintained the confidence of the American people, perhaps the most important part of a transition.

### Bubba in Paradise

Clinton's approach to the transition was as different from Reagan's as his ideology. Some of what he tried worked. Clinton had run with the slogan "It's the economy, stupid!" Once elected, he prioritized economic growth and organized his economic conference

## Getting Started

If the new president is looking for assistance, the Heritage Foundation (www.heritage.org) offers "The Keys to a Successful Presidency." Part of the Mandate for Leadership Project, "Keys" reprints transcripts from recent forums exploring eight different components necessary to plan and start a strong administration.

The Council for Excellence in Government also held a series of speeches and worskshops, drawing together the likes of Ted Sorenson, Marlin Fitzwater, and other officials from past administrations. Event transcripts—covering topics ranging from presidential leadership styles and the Fourth Estate to preparing to govern—can be found at www.excelgov.org.

The old maxim that success has a thousand fathers bodes well for the Transition to Government Project, undertaken by the American Enterprise Institute (www.aei.org/governing) in conjunction with the Brookings Institution (www.brookings.edu) and the Hoover Institution (www.hoover.org) and funded by the Pew Charitable Trust. The project has held numerous panels and book discussions and recently published *Preparing To Be President*, Professor Richard E. Neustadt's collected memos advising presidents Kennedy, Reagan, and Clinton on successful transitions.

Future chiefs of staff, take note: In June, The James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University gathered 10 former chiefs of staff


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in Little Rock. He carefully considered key economic appointments and assigned top positions to knowledgeable people like Leon Panetta (Office of Management and Budget), Robert Rubin (National Economic Council), Lloyd Bentsen (Treasury Department), and Laura D'Andrea Tyson (Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors).

Not coincidentally, the strength of the economy has been one of Clinton's crowning achievements. His economic plan was in place by the summer of 1993; his carefully selected appointees helped the nation weather storm after economic storm, and he never lost the faith of the bond markets—which many credit with bringing lower interest rates and higher levels of prosperity.

But the rest of Clinton's transition was a mess; he lost the public's faith and was set up for the failures of his first two years. His health-care plan crashed and he was forced to declare in 1995 that, indeed, he was still "relevant." After his election in '92, Clinton seemed to spend most of his time in late-night bull sessions or mulling over cabinet appointments. Waiting until the last minute to name most of his White House staff, Clinton came to office unprepared to govern. He couldn't stick to his agenda; his new staff was filled with 20-somethings; and he didn't seem to have any senior advisers around him even who knew how to find the White House bathrooms. As he told *The New Yorker*, "For the first two years ... I was trying to learn the job, learning how to get the White House functioning."

In part, Clinton's slow start came from his team's post-election arrogance. Some on the Clinton team didn't want to stop thinking about tomorrow and they forgot about yesterday. According to Marlin Fitzwater, Reagan's and Bush's well-respected press secretary, when Fitzwater met George Stephanopolous to discuss the ins and outs of the job, Stephanopolous put his feet on the table and made it clear that they'd only need about five minutes to get through their business. Part of the slow start was circumstantial: Being the first Democratic president since Carter not only left him with fewer Democratic White House veterans to tap, but also meant that liberal interest groups were hungry to push their pent-up agendas.

Clinton also tied his administration's legs together by appointing childhood friend and Arkansas businessman Thomas "Mack" McLarty as chief of staff. McLarty was loyal to Clinton but he didn't know the first thing about how Washington really worked. Although outsiders in some areas in an administration can insert fresh ideas, it is essential the people in top positions have both legislative and executive experience at the federal level. Kennedy and Ford had extensive experience in Congress, but not in the executive branch; Clinton finally got both kinds of experience in just one man when he named Leon Panetta, who had directed the OMB and had served as a congressman, as his second chief of staff.

After appointing McLarty, Clinton stopped filling his staff positions. By the time Clinton selected a congressional liaison, press secretary, domestic policy advisor, and general counsel, the inauguration was less than a week away. Instead, Clinton had focused on the noble but laborious process of fulfilling his campaign promise to create a cabinet that mirrored the country's ethnic and racial makeup. He also spent weeks

from the Ford, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations for a conference on the chief of staff's roll. (www.rice.edu/projects/baker)

The Brookings Institution is also conducting the Presidential Appointee Initiative (www.appointee.brookings.edu), which will attempt to make the appointee process more efficient and will offer, in conjunction with the Council for Excellence in Government, *A Survivor's Guide for Presidential Nominees*, a guidebook for those tapped by the next administration.

Supplementing this is "Obstacle Course," a Century Foundation (www.tcf.org) report detailing suggestions for making the appointee process more manageable. In addition to several reports, the White House 2001 project (www.whitehouse2001.org) will offer an online nomination form that appointees can download and use to fill out forms for several agencies simultaneously. Its White House Interview Program has drawn from presidential archives and interviews with officials from previous administrations to gather information on several key staff positions, including chief of staff, staff secretary, the press secretary, communications director, counsel to the president, and director of office of administration.

The Center for the Study of the Presidency (www.thepresidency.org) offers the "Report to the President-Elect: Dialogues on Presidential Leadership", a transcript from a March 2000 symposium featuring experts from government, academia, and the media. —*JD*

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embroiled in controversy after his top two picks for attorney general, Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood, were tripped up by issues regarding their hired help.

Four months to the day after Clinton was sworn in, the White House announced that seven employees from the White House travel office had been fired following a week-long audit by Peat Marwick. Clinton's 25-year-old cousin was appointed to take over the operations. A week later, the White House backpedaled and rehired five of the seven staffers after a week of gripes from the press corps, which used the office to make travel arrangements. The whole episode, while fairly minor, created the impression that the Clinton White House was in total chaos.

Like Carter, Clinton also ran into trouble with Congress right off the bat. Almost immediately after coming to office, Clinton tried to raise grazing fees and slash mining subsidies for ranchers and miners operating on federal land. Not surprisingly, senators from Western states, a disproportionately powerful group, screamed bloody murder and tried to crush the initiatives.

Clinton yielded and withdrew the measure, simultaneously letting down his supporters in the House and upsetting environmentalists while gaining little favor with the infuriated Western congressmen.

As president-elect, he offhandedly announced that he would allow gays to serve in the military, setting off a national firestorm: The proposal distracted attention from the rest of his agenda, and weakened his standing with the miliary. Although Clinton's intentions were noble, his mistake was in pursuing so controversial a change before becoming well established as president and earning the public's and the military's trust.

In the end, the Clinton transition is probably best summed up by the results of Filegate. In a rush to obtain security clearances for White House personnel, the president's staff had inadvertently submitted an outdated list to the FBI, which responded by sending over confidential files on some 900 people—many of whom happened to be Clinton's political adversaries. In June 1996, the media got wind of the administration's possession of the files, and the Republicans called out the hounds. Four years later, the special counsel office cleared the White House: Clinton wasn't guilty of malice, just incompetence.

## Next Up

When the next president moves into the White House, the decisions he makes during those first few months have the potential to define his place in the history books. Al Gore or George W. Bush will have the advantage of knowing these lessons from the past, but they'll undoubtedly be faced with some new challenges. Some will be beyond their control—most notably, the fact that the entire nomination process has been slowed as Congress has become more partisan and even FBI background checks seem to take longer. More than half the appointees confirmed between 1984 and 1999 waited five months or more for Senate confirmation, according to a recent report funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. By contrast, a mere one-sixth of the appointees confirmed between 1964 and 1984 waited that long.

Fortunately, the new president will also have a little more help than some of his early predecessors; administration staffers aren't the only ones interested in a smooth transition. Over the years, various groups and individuals have floated ideas to pass some of the key knowledge from one administration to the next. In September, Congress amended the Presidential Transition Act, a law passed in 1963 to provide transition funding that was increased in the 1970s and indexed to inflation in the 1980s. If approved by Clinton, the act will fund orientation training for incoming senior-level appointees and provide them with critical information on the responsibilities and mission of their departments. Perhaps the best source of information though, are past occupants of top White House positions, who are much more likely to share their experiences than commonly thought; after all, they're patriots too.

One reform that should be made is to establish a small core of permanent civil servants in the offices of the White House. Their knowledge of how the offices function and what succeeded and failed in the past could make transitions less problematic by providing each new administration with institutional memory.

Despite all this information, it will still be up to the winning candidate whether he sinks or swims. Gore seems to have a strong advantage. Having served as vice president for eight years, he has a deep interest in all elements of government, and has even been willing to stick his fingers into the least sexy programs like government reinvention. Bush's victory, on the other hand, would be a little more worrisome. While Dick Cheney will bring the bicycle wheel, none of Bush's triumvirate of top advisers—Joe Allbaugh, Karl Rove, and Karen Hughes—have extensive federal experience. Might Bush make Carter and Clinton's mistake and assume that serving as governor is adequate preparation for the Oval Office? ●


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# Clintonese

## *Clinton's new language for the presidency*

BY MICKEY KAUS

THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO REASONS to approach Michael Waldman's memoir of the Clinton White House with lowered expectations. Waldman wasn't a key policy adviser. He was speechwriter to a president allergic to interesting language. Nor does the Clinton presidency have an especially compelling story arc, despite all the scandal and impeachment. Basically, Clinton lost control of Congress after two years, and much of the rest of his presidency has consisted of a long, tedious comeback. His second term has not featured major legislative triumphs or even dramatic failures.

*Under review...*

**POTUS SPEAKS: Finding the Words that Defined the Clinton Presidency**

*by Michael Waldman*

Simon & Schuster, $25.00

But Waldman has written a rich, honest, funny memoir, one that I think succeeds in its stated goal of accurately capturing the flavor of Clinton's terms, at least a large part (the good part) of that flavor. In part that's because Waldman has no particular axes to grind—he's not a big enough cheese to have a reputation to defend, he wasn't involved in a scandal, wasn't fired, doesn't have scores to settle. He's not even embittered. He came to Clinton's campaign from the Naderite left, and, as he puts it, "I didn't fall in love at first, only to feel betrayed and disillusioned later. Instead, exposed to [Clinton] over many years, I grew steadily more impressed."

Waldman isn't his book's hero; he wanders through Clinton's terms as an amused, self-effacing idealist, plugging unsuccessfully for campaign finance reform, dutifully defending a trade agreement he had previously fought against, ultimately doing his part to help Clinton make the transition to what Waldman claims is a "new kind of presidency," dependent "more than ever before on the bully pulpit," on a steady stream of speeches, events, and executive actions rather than big campaigns for big legislation in the New Deal/Great Society manner.

He seems to have had fun, or maybe he just cut the boring parts. He goes home in a huff one day and Clinton winds up delivering the pre-fact-checked draft of a major NAFTA address, with Presidents Ford, Carter, and Bush in attendance. Clinton's "eyes bulged briefly as he realized something was amiss," then he ad libbed off a text filled with hideous errors. Panicked, Waldman finds then-adviser David Gergen in the crowd, who shrugs and correctly advises "Don't worry about it." Few notice. In 1996, Waldman accompanies Clinton to an environmental event, at which the president dramatically releases a no-longer-endangered bald eagle into the wild.

"I stood at the back of the crowd and watched as Clinton released the magnificent bird, which took wing, soaring off to the left, and was promptly attacked by some osprey. It plummeted into the bay. Fortunately, a Coast Guard boat rescued the eagle and returned it to its comfortable home indoors."

One day Waldman and other mid-level aides are eating lunch at the White House mess, when they notice that Ira Magaziner, author of the failed 1994 health-care plan, is greeting Robert McNamara, seated at the next table. "Our entire table watched transfixed. 'OK,' someone finally said. 'Captions.'

'You destroyed a Democratic presidency? Hey, that's amazing! *I* destroyed a Democratic presidency too!' I offered."

Some of Waldman's anecdotes have a *Washington Monthly*-esque point. He notes Clinton's failure, during the 1992 transition, "to understand the importance of the White House staff," which "wields more power less accountably than nearly any cabinet secretary." Amazingly, Clinton, like Carter, seems to have thought that the Cabinet was where the action was, that he could place himself at the "hub of a wheel with many spokes." Like Carter, he discovered this was a "recipe for chaos," that he needed a strong White

MICKEY KAUS, *author of* The End of Equality, *writes for* kausfiles.com *and* Slate.

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House staff to "seize the stage."

Waldman also has a good feel for Washington Make-Believe, as in the story of a White House aide, who, during the NAFTA fight, accurately denies to a reporter that Clinton had promised a congressman a project in a trade for his vote. Soon the congressman is calling the aide on the phone.

"'Did you get a call from the press?' 'Yes, don't worry, I denied it.' 'What the hell are you trying to do to me?' he sputtered. 'My constituents will think I'm a sucker.'"

**Gridlock may have been good for America.**

Waldman knows how to keep his chapters short, his story rolling. He has his heroes and villains, but there's nothing etched in acid, or even surrounded by too many adjectives. Villains include Ann Lewis, a politically-correct bigfoot who screws up the second, liberal half of Clinton's famous utterance "The era of big government is over," when she objects on anti-sexism grounds to the sentence, "But the era of every man for himself must never begin." Howard Paster, Clinton's first legislative director, comes off as a hack Washington lobbyist who helps congressional Democrats block campaign finance reform. Ex-speaker Thomas Foley is a pompous obstructionist on this issue as well. Chief of staff Erskine Bowles wastes time on "an elaborate, business school-style endeavor known as the Pillars project," in which the administration's policies are clustered for marketing purposes into categories ("pillars"). Nader, wittily, urges Waldman, "Remember. Your purpose is not only to serve but to swerve"—left, that is—and then denounces him when he defends NAFTA. Heroes in this and, I suspect, in future accounts are Stakhanovite aides Gene Sperling and Bruce Reed.

What about Dick Morris, the strategist who began secretly advising Clinton after the 1994 debacle? Waldman has an admirably mixed attitude toward Morris, who, after all, was his rival in the contest for influence with POTUS (a zero-sum game for most speechwriters). At one point, Morris horns in and hurriedly rewrites Waldman's State of the Union, faxing in a rough draft with no spacing between paragraphs. "It was, frankly, brilliant. I still learn from it to this day," Waldman says. But he also makes it clear that Morris had become slightly crazed and fallen out of favor even before he was caught sucking a prostitute's toes in 1996.

Clinton himself comes across as, basically, conscientious. His speech lines are often the keepers, and not just because he's boss. He's only close to being in over his head once, when talking with Treasury officials during the global financial near-meltdown of 1998—but he understands international finance well enough to calm the markets even though he was in the middle of an impeachment crisis. (Waldman counterposes the policy machinations with the Monica machinations in a successful bit of novelistic gimmickry. There's a great scene, on the day the story breaks, in which aides who failed to read the morning papers show up at Bowles' business-as-usual meeting and start thumbing through the clips, stopping at *The Washington Post*.)

At one point, Clinton says he thinks the entitlements problem "got harder to solve the more you talked about it," arguing (in a "countryboy drawl thickening as it often did when he was advancing positions that were more frequently heard in a faculty club than a trailer park"):

"'I *do* believe it *will* appreciably increase the chances of doing something on these big Social Security and Medicare issues if we *don't* get specific. So I don't mind having the elitists dump on me on that, because they don't have a responsibility to get anything done.'"

A key Waldman insight—which seems obvious but isn't often stated—is that Clinton survived not just because of the good economy or any particular legislative results but also because the voters recognized and approved his conscientious leadership style.

Yet this POTUS ultimately didn't get that much done in his second term, save for effectively using the slogan "Save Social Security First" to keep the tax-cutters and spenders away from the budget surplus. This failure came despite Clinton's fretting about his legacy early and often. If anything Clinton comes off as knowing too much history:

"For much of an hour, he traced the country's history and the role of the presidency and the Democratic Party. He had just read a 700-page biography of John Marshall ... Throughout the country's history, Clinton said, one of the parties has been dominant—and it has been the one that stood most strongly for the nation."

It's not clear what relevance such preexisting his-


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torical patterns and cycles had for Clinton's attempt to "save government from its own excesses." Nationalist parties had always been dominant? OK. And air power alone had never won a war—until last year. New things happen. Clinton sometimes seems in danger of becoming an example of the anti-aphorism that those who do not ignore history are condemned to think it will be repeated.

What about Clinton's dark side? It's not here. Not that it doesn't exist (though Waldman says "his temper was overrated"). Not that Waldman approves. It's just not here, either because Waldman didn't see it or he left it out out of loyalty or a desire to work for Democrats again. The latter possibility makes the book's treatment of Hillary Rodham Clinton especially intriguing; she's virtually absent, moving through the narrative like an invisible tenth planet whose existence is divined only from her secondary effects (like the 1994 health care debacle that cost Democrats control of Congress for the rest of the century). If Waldman is more scared of reprisals from Hillary than from Bill ... well, then his fears comport with those of other Clinton staffers I've known.

My main beef with *POTUS Speaks* is with its overall thesis, the idea of a "new kind of presidency" made up of many smaller initiatives and executive actions—an idea Waldman largely credits to my *Slate* colleague Jacob Weisberg. How much of this is genuine innovation, and how much is Clinton making the best of a bad situation, in which he's lost control of Congress to his enemies (and hence has to try to govern by executive order) and is constantly under investigation (and hence to keep his popularity up—at one point telling his staff he'd love to avoid all the "mind numbing" little events his predecessors avoided, but "FDR did *not* have someone trying to put him in *jail*.")?

Take the idea of governing through executive actions. Waldman says, "Welfare reform was already largely in place through waivers granted to the states by the time it was enacted by Congress." This is an exaggeration. While the waivers were important, the early-'90s waiver era doesn't compare with the vast and pervasive change in the welfare system that followed Congress' 1996 reform. Waldman's big example, the "archetype issue for the post-modern presidency," is tobacco. The tobacco industry was initially regulated by the FDA, then sued by state attorneys general. No congressmen needed! But even setting aside qualms about letting ambitious state AGs (or federal cabinet officials) govern by litigation, the full settlement of the tobacco issue, Waldman writes, "required sweeping legislation from Congress, including an increase in the tobacco tax." If I remember right, it didn't pass.

As Waldman notes, Clinton was lucky, in pursuing his "new presidency," in that the big thing he decided to accomplish in his second term—using the surplus to pay down the debt—was what was going to happen anyway if gridlock prevented action. It was the default position. And the system defaulted. In general, gridlock may have been temporarily good for America, in that Clinton was able to resist tax cuts, while Republicans were able to restrain spending. In the future, one suspects, the things that need to be done—establishing some sort of universal health coverage and fixing Social Security in an era of dramatic medical advances—will have to be done the old fashioned, cumbersome, Rooseveltian way, by getting Congress to pass laws and getting the president to sign them.

Still, it's already pretty clear that historians, as well as voters, will soon look back on Clinton's presidency with a good deal of admiration. Waldman's fine book will help them make their case, and let them smile doing it.


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# Tidbits & Outrages

## His friend with the scorpions never got off the plane.

At the Los Angeles airport, a man was arrested after hiding lizards stuffed in tube socks in his underwear.

## The donkey only got a card.

The Columbian president, as well as national dignitaries and ambassadors, assembled for a ceremony honoring Carlos Sanchez, who plays Juan Valdez in coffee commericals on the character's 40th birthday.

## What do the NRA and Barbara Bush have in common?

*At its final meeting of the year, the National Rifle Association voted not to endorse presidential candidate George W. Bush as part of a strategic move to help him.*

## Don't you know how much I knead you?

*The White House head pastry chef has been charged with sexual harassment by another chef on staff.*

## Priorities!

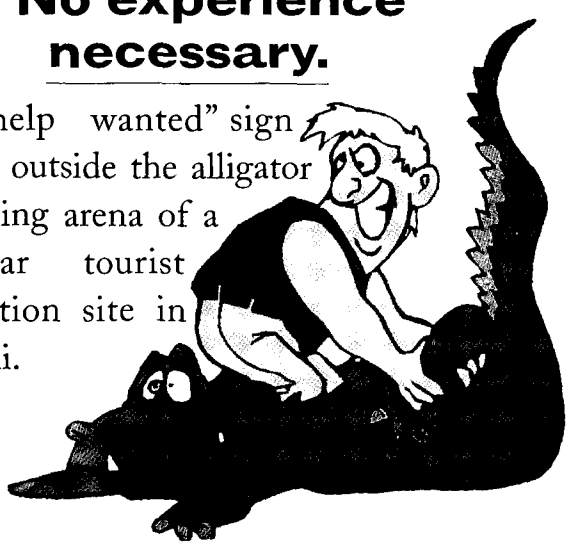
The senior vice president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges was fired after failing to submit new data to the college rankings department at *U.S News & World Report.*

## Next semester: Marriage without Commitment.

First Class, Inc., a continuing education program in Washington, D.C., will offer a class this fall entitled "Making A Living Without A Job."

## No experience necessary.

A "help wanted" sign hangs outside the alligator wrestling arena of a popular tourist attraction site in Miami.





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# Political Booknotes

## Bread Or Bullets

**By Jacob Heilbrunn**

PHEW! FOR A BRIEF MOMENT there, it looked like the 1970s all over again. The booming American economy was suddenly saddled with rising oil prices, which threatened to lead to stagflation—or high unemployment and inflation rates. The even more vulnerable western European countries experienced long gas lines and protests. To top it off, the old Israeli-Palestinian conflict flared up again. The 1970s retro-look looked as if it was becoming the real thing.

But world leaders have learned the lessons of the past. OPEC oil ministers, wary of spurring the West into serious conservation measures and unwilling to disrupt the world economy, boosted output, while the Clinton administration opened the spigot of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, pumping up not just Al Gore's fortunes, but also the economy's. Meanwhile, the Republicans sputtered helplessly about the Clinton administration's disregard for America's national interests in opening up the reserve.

Pity the poor GOP. The fact is that even an uptick in oil prices, while it resulted in some grumbling, hardly prompted any members of the electorate to divert their attention from "Survivor" or "Big Brother" to foreign policy. Whether it's pounding away at the issue of military readiness or China policy, the GOP's biggest foe hasn't so much been the Clinton administration as the national disinterest of the American public in the national interest. It isn't so much a new age of good feelings as an age of no feelings.

The biggest victims of this quiescent era, however, are the foreign policy pundits. Absent an enemy—and, despite the huffing and puffing in some quarters, North Korea does not cut the mustard—the era of grand strategizing is over. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger belong to an earlier period, not to be duplicated. Journals such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* are searching for the next big idea. But the foreign policy torch, such as it is, flickers only faintly and has been handed off to area studies experts who can explain local conflicts—Armenians versus Azeris, and so on—in mind-numbing detail. Sure, globalization is the buzz word that trips off the tongues of the world's financial gurus, but no one has explained what it is much beyond evoking Karl Marx's prediction of an "interdependence of nations."

**THE DYNAMICS OF GLOBAL DOMINANCE: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980**
*by David Abernethy*
Yale University Press, $35.00

AND

**EASTWARD TO TARTARY: Travels in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus**
*by Robert D. Kaplan*
Random House, $26.95

It is thus something of a pleasant surprise to come across David B. Abernethy's *The Dynamics of Global Dominance* and Robert D. Kaplan's *Eastward To Tartary*. These two books could not be more different. The first is a learned discussion of European overseas empires, complete with the requisite methodological apparatus customary in political science these days. The second is a bird's-eye view of the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus as seen by a jaundiced travel writer. While both are flawed, they are packed with provocative insights. They suggest that perhaps there may yet be hope for the foreign affairs field.

Abernethy, a political science professor at Stanford University, does not set his sights low. He wishes to provide nothing less than a sweeping account of the rise and fall of colonialism. Following in the path of scholar Charles Tilly, who has founded an entire geopolitical school of thought, Abernethy asks how it was possible for the rulers of eight countries that accounted for 14 percent of the land surface of the earth—Portugal, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy—could take over large chunks of Africa, Asia, and Central America. Abernethy suggests that, given the current instability around the globe, prosperous Western countries can even learn from the "more experienced weak, poor ones about the destabilizing consequences of globalization."

The notion of imperialism first came into vogue around the turn of the 19th century. Until then, it had been received wisdom that expansion was self-evidently a good thing. There were a few excesses, as demonstrated by the famous trial of Warren Hastings, the former British potentate in India, but a serene confidence in the essential rightness of colonialism was accepted. Sometimes European powers cooperated with each other abroad; in China, for example, German and British troops fought together to suppress the natives. When news of the outbreak of World War I arrived, surely to the surprise and delight of the locals, the British and German troops began firing upon each other.

But with the circulation of 19th-century British malcontent J.A. Hobson's denunciation (which was picked up by Lenin, who termed the imperial impulse the final stage of capitalism), imperialism started to come into bad odor. Things fell apart fairly quickly. The 20th century was about the crackup of the great European empires. World War I polished off the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, and the Russian monarchy. Hitler's thousand-year Reich crumbled after 13. The Soviet Union was an attempt to resuscitate the old czarist contraption, but even 70 years of ruthlessness weren't enough to extirpate nationalist feeling.

How did it all get started? Abernethy quite rightly notes that various enterprises pushed colonialism along. He writes, "People living in the metropoles were generally uninformed about and uninterested in overseas expansion" in its early stages in the 15th century. Sound familiar? Instead, "important decisions were made by leaders of sectoral institutions: monarchs, officials in the royal court, directors of government-chartered companies, heads of Roman Catholic missionary orders." Though Abernethy does not say so, this state of affairs is the dream of most national

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security types. Though they have to pay pious homage to democracy, they would really like to get things done, which means that, for all the Council on Foreign Relations' talk about the need to get the broader public interested in foreign affairs, it's the last thing anyone really wants. What they want is deference and attention, not opinions.

European leaders were easily able to get away with thuggish behavior and drape it in the vestments of honor and nobility, not just profit. Abernethy suggests that things really got cracking once western Europe got the technological edge on its rivals. Coupled with the introduction of European diseases, subjugating the natives was a fairly easy enterprise. According to Abernethy, "The estimated three to four million Amerindians who inhabited Hispaniola as of 1492 numbered about fifteen thousand by 1518 and essentially disappeared by 1570." Sometimes, though, it was the whites who were vulnerable. The west African coast became known as "the white man's grave" because of malaria and other tropical illnesses.

For all his legwork recounting in some detail the history of imperialism, Abernethy shies from reaching much of a conclusion about its effects. He correctly observes that it did spread Western institutions—such as the rule of law in India. But he retreats into saying: "Among the most reprehensible aspects of colonialism, in my judgment, were its deliberate, systematic, and sustained assaults on human dignity." Well, yes. But that's not exactly news. Today, the great powers are on better behavior. A guilt complex is evident, à la Clinton apologizing in Africa for the excesses of the Cold War.

But that doesn't necessarily mean, as Robert Kaplan observes, that matters have improved all that much. Kaplan, you might say, takes a rather saturnine view of the world. Kaplan does not come by his views easily, and his book is the product of incredibly hard work. A tough traveler, he seems to have been everywhere and talked to everyone, from peasants to presidents.

His new book is a sequel, he says, to his earlier *Balkan Ghosts*, a work cited by President Clinton as a reason for not intervening in the Balkans. It depicted the hostilities in the Balkans as the product of ancient enmities that outside powers were incapable of extinguishing. Kaplan maintains that he is not offering a prescription in any of his books for whether to intervene, but simply describing harsh realities. *Eastward to Tartary* is no less bleak.

Kaplan writes that in the Near East democracy will be beside the point: "The fundamental issue will be the survival of the states themselves—by whatever means. The battle over Caspian pipelines, the coming conflict between Iran and Azerbaijan, the resurgence of Russia under a quasi-autocracy, instability in post-Assad Syria, chaos in Georgia, and stagnation in rural Romania and Bulgaria—if those two countries are left out of NATO—such might be tomorrow's headlines." Might.

Still, even if these conflicts do not materialize, Kaplan provides astute assessments of the new territory he has explored. His encounters are revealing. Bulgaria's head of state, President Petar Stoyanov, thanked him for taking the time to visit the country. "I was struck," says Kaplan, "by the president's certainty that almost any kind of publicity would be good for Bulgaria. The fear here was of being forgotten."

But Kaplan's perceptions of the countries he visits are rooted in something of an atavistic belief that they are prisoners of their past. Kaplan, you might say, believes that race and geography are destiny.

Here is Kaplan on the Near East: "Fundamentally, little had changed in regional politics since Herodotus and Thucydides. For Herodotus, the fault zones had been ethnic and cultural ... Thucydides later reduced Herodotus' chronicle of cultural clash to the steely confines of power politics."

More colorfully, here is Kaplan on crossing the border from Romania to Bulgaria by train: "The compartment was now jammed with people standing in the aisles: men with outlandish clothes, shaven heads and unshaven faces, and the most violent of expressions .... The middle-aged couple across from me cowered in fear as the train slowly crossed the wide Danube into Bulgaria."

No doubt Kaplan could respond that he is describing harsh realities that other writers are afraid to express in a politically correct age. But one wonders whether it isn't a little like ascribing primordial traits to Germany after World War II. The truth is that national characteristics are often invented after the fact, either as a state-building myth, as in the case of Serbia, or as a way to bludgeon the defeated enemy. Reducing subtle thinkers like Herodotus and Thucydides to ethnic or power politics may be rather unfair to them. The Greeks, after all, were not big on racial distinctions. Quite the contrary; the reason they resented the Jews was because they remained stubbornly independent, resisting the Greek ideal of the oekoumene, or universal civilization.

Today, it is the United States that carries the aspiration of a universal culture, and it seems to be working. McDonald's and the English language are making inroads everywhere. Neither Abernethy nor Kaplan speculates about the consequences for the U.S. But at the apex of American power, its population is largely indifferent to the country's power and prestige. For all the problems this presents for the foreign policy set, maybe it's a good sign. If the biggest difficulty Americans face is filling up an SUV, there may be no need for concern. Unless, of course, Kaplan turns out to be right about where the world is headed.

JACOB HEILBRUNN *has written for* The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, *and the* Times Literary Supplement.

# The Preacher

**By Ben Soskis**

FOR THE LAST DECADE, YALE Law School professor Stephen L. Carter has admirably played the role of the eloquent scold, the solemn prophet in the wilderness, shaking his staff at a nation that has forgotten God. In his widely praised *The Culture of Disbelief*, Carter attacked a devoutly secular political and media elite that, he claimed, discounted religious conviction and openly mocked faith. But what does the prophet do when the wilderness shows signs of blooming, and when presidential candidates offer Augustinian spiritual confessions on the stump? Well, he revises his thesis. So in his new book, *God's Name in Vain*, Carter addresses both "the wrongs and


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rights of religion in politics," paying special attention to the damage done to religion by too close a proximity to the grimy, compromising dictates of the electoral machinery.

Carter now advocates a turn to a "principled and prophetic religious activism," a ministry engaged in the public sphere, but not of it. Among his several role models for this activism is the biblical prophet Nathan, who chastised King David for his indiscretions but didn't go yammering for impeachment. The biblical prophets, suggests Carter, "were not calling for new rulers—they were calling upon the current rulers to rule differently." One could object, of course, that this restraint makes more sense in a theocracy than in a democracy, where it is the task of citizens, and not of God, to elect their leaders. Moreover, as the recent furor over "issue ads" has shown, it has become increasingly difficult to disentangle the positions held by various interest groups (pro-life or pro-choice organizations, for example) from an implicit partisanship.

Carter's few practical prescriptions to encourage this modern-day prophetic activism are relatively uninspiring—he suggests consumer boycotts of morally-corrupting institutions and the need for more time spent "thinking." In fact, for all his revisions, Carter still saves much of his sermonic exuberance for a detailed analysis of contemporary society's arrogant underestimation of religion. Simply put, the American political establishment does not understand faith's primary essence: its totality. The establishment believes religion can be sequestered in a "private sphere," but as Carter writes, "religion has no sphere ... it sneaks through cracks, creeps through half-open doors."

This fallacy, argues Carter, has corrupted the nation's understanding of the church-state divide. The liberal establishment views that separation from the side of the state, "subdu[ing] the power of religion, to twist it to the ends preferred by the state." But that approach needs to be reoriented toward the prerogatives of the believer—only then will religion's totality be respected. The state must recognize the existence of "religious interest[s] ... so vital that no state interest—not even a compelling one—can overcome them," even if those interests run contrary to the interests of the state. Therefore, the government should actively accommodate religious freedom, pushing aside legal obstacles so that a variety of religions can flourish (however, Carter does not make clear the standards by which a belief system becomes a religion; ironically, when it comes to faith, Carter is a relativist). For government to remain neutrally supportive of religion, as it is now, is to countenance the unofficial establishment of religion by the state, the sanctioning of those faiths most easily "domesticated," and the weeding out of those more subversive. Thus, writes Carter, the state becomes the "evangelist" for religions that favor the status quo.

**GOD'S NAME IN VAIN: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics**
*by Stephen L. Carter*
Basic Books, $26.00

But it is possible to argue that contemporary liberalism's understanding of the necessary separations between church and state is based not on an ignorance of religion's totality but on a disciplined understanding of totality's implications. For tucked within the idea of totality, and within all totalizing ideologies, is


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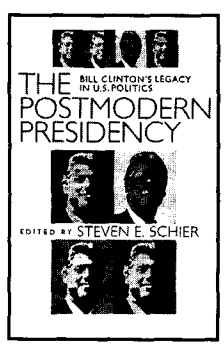


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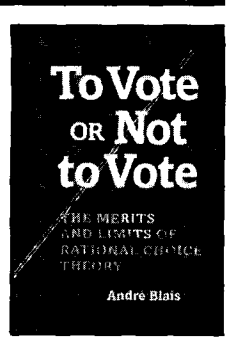


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the impulse toward coercion. This was the idea that Isaiah Berlin appreciated so finely, and which he articulated by distinguishing two forms of liberty, negative and positive, which have developed in historically conflicting directions. Negative liberty, which he defined as the "maximum degree of non-interference compatible with the minimum demands of social life," liberalism should endorse wholeheartedly. Positive liberty, based on the need to be "one's own master," has led to the belief that individuals remain unfree when they are enslaved by certain passions or delusions, and has encouraged the conviction that it is worthwhile to forcibly extract them from these bonds. This belief, suggests Berlin, liberalism must suspect and restrain. In other words, Carter is not wrong to imagine an antagonism between universalizing religions and the liberal state; he just errs in assigning it purely to liberalism's totalitarian "moral arrogance."

In fact, perhaps due to his evangelical background, Carter seems unable to understand religious freedom without the concept of positive liberty. For Carter, the man of faith is not only transformed by the Word of God, but filled with the need to transform the world as well. And if he is kept from his efforts to change the world, his religious freedom is impeded. Undoubtedly, sometimes this mission is a good thing. For instance, Carter makes frequent references to the abolitionists, arguing that their activism was based on a desire to cultivate "a rich soil in which the Word could take root." Would we have wanted them to keep God out of the public sphere? To do so would be to strip America of its moral conscience.

Perhaps, though there are many secular moralists who would disagree. Moreover, Carter underestimates the danger of a universalizing religion grasping the mechanisms of coercion held by the state and "subduing" citizens to fit its own interests. A respect for "genuine diversity," which Carter believes is "the strongest argument in favor of the accommodation of religion," might actually require the restraining of those religions which seek to impose their views on others. There are historical precedents for this idea, but Carter does not seem to pay them much heed. He deftly passes over the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition, writing that in neither case was violence motivated by a proselytizing zeal. This does not seem right to me—the choice of conversion or death was not an unfamiliar one to Jews and "heretics" of the Middle Ages—and it is a bit surprising to see Carter make such bold assessments in such a slim book.

In many ways, *God's Name in Vain* is like a well-delivered sermon; its strength derives less from the soundness of its logic or the fineness of its historical insights, than from the intensity of the speaker's convictions and from the sense of his own rightness. And no doubt he'll get some "Amens" from the pews. But, this time, he'll win few converts.

BEN SOSKIS *is assistant editor at* The New Republic.

**THE INFORMANT: A True Story**
*by Kurt Eichenwald*
Broadway Books, $26.00

# Against The Grain

**By Robert Weissman**

IN NOVEMBER 1992, FBI AGENT Brian Shepherd and two other agents paid a visit to the home of Michael Andreas, vice chairman of Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), the grain trader and food processor that promotes itself as the "Supermarket to the World." The G-men were responding to a back channel communication from ADM, a report that the company was the victim of industrial espionage. The industrial espionage claim turned out to be a hoax perpetrated by an ADM executive. But the visit to Mick Andreas, the son of the politically super-influential Dwayne Andreas, was certainly worth the FBI agents' time.

The meeting set in motion a chain of events that ultimately led to the uncovering of a series of worldwide price-fixing conspiracies. When all was said and done, Mick Andreas would be sentenced to three years in jail; ADM would agree to pay $100 million in fines—at the time, the largest criminal antitrust fines ever—for conspiring to fix the prices of lysine, a farm animal food additive, and citric acid; ADM's Japanese and Korean co-conspirators would plead guilty to criminal charges; and information from the ADM investigation would lead off another series of cases.

The linchpin in the whole story is the executive who perpetrated the industrial espionage hoax: Mark Whitacre, the president of ADM's bioproducts division, a rising star in the company, and the informant who gives the title to *New York Times* reporter Kurt Eichenwald's mesmerizing story. While he would eventually confess to the FBI that his claim that a Japanese competitor had introduced a secret virus into an ADM plant and that a company executive offered to help ADM eliminate the virus for a $10 million payoff was a lie, Whitacre offered genuine information about price-fixing.

"The competitors are our friends, and the customers are our enemies." That, Whitacre told the FBI, was the governing motto at ADM. And, as he taped phone calls, wore a wire in illegal cartel meetings, cooperated with the FBI to arrange videotaping of secret meetings, and reported back to his FBI handlers, Whitacre handed the FBI the explosive evidence that would be used to leverage the corporate plea agreements and win the conviction of Mick Andreas and another top ADM executives.

As the cloak-and-dagger investigation unfolds, *The Informant* becomes more intricate and intriguing. More and more evidence of rampant criminality at ADM and among the co-conspirators comes to light. As the investigation advances, the Department of Justice enters the scene. Soon FBI agents and Justice Department lawyers are engaged in an out-of-Hollywood battle over the handling of the case. Internal Justice Department conflicts erupt over control of the prosecution.

Through it all, Eichenwald keeps his primary focus on Whitacre, a reporter's dream subject. Indeed, Whitacre spun a web of deceit that repeatedly misled the FBI and eventually landed him in jail for embezzle-


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ment—with a considerably longer jail term than the ADM executives. Unraveling Whitacre's deceptions makes reading *The Informant* even more gripping. The result is a spell-binding account, as much of a page-turner as a Grisham novel.

Concentrating on Whitacre inevitably fosters a kind of psychologizing: Was Whitacre simply a troubled man—a compulsive liar, who for unclear reasons drew the FBI into the criminal world of ADM? Did his conscience drive him into the FBI's arms? Were his deceptions a product of the strains of being a whistle-blower and years working undercover? Did he actually think he could get away with his embezzlements? Did he really believe that embezzling was expected or tacitly endorsed at ADM? (Eichenwald, who provokes many more questions of this nature than he answers, firmly rejects this final possibility—which would have given Whitacre a defense against the embezzlement charges—despite its apparent plausibility given the rampant criminality at ADM.)

While the focus on Whitacre enables Eichenwald to construct a fascinating tale, it does come with considerable costs. In a significant way, the story of one of the great corporate crimes of the century recedes into the background.

The ADM investigation revealed a stunning lawlessness among top corporate executives. Their brazen, conscious, premeditated law-breaking cost consumers tens and perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars and raises deeply troubling questions about the conduct of global corporations. After all, these were not executives who decided to cut corners and make a one-time illegal discharge into a river; these were top company officials who conspired, at meeting after meeting, to set prices, divide market share, elude law enforcement, and cheat the public. Were ADM and its co-conspirators rogue companies, or not-so-atypical corporations who just happened to be caught because of Whitacre? What in these companies' corporate cultures permitted such casual and routine law-breaking? These are not questions Eichenwald explores.

Nor does he scrutinize the handling of the case by the Justice Department, or raise the question of why the Justice Department failed to question ADM Chairman Dwayne Andreas or company President James Randall—a matter on which the Justice Department refuses to comment.

*The Informant* is a thrilling read. But when it comes to searching for the answers to the serious questions about corporate culture and the politics that linger after the close of the case, readers will have to look elsewhere.

ROBERT WEISSMAN *is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based* Multinational Monitor.

# Today And Tomorrow Abroad

**By Steve Kettmann**

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR, CNN's star foreign correspondent, voiced the thoughts of many in a recent speech blasting networks for claiming viewers do not care about foreign news. "It's just flat out not true," she said. "What Americans don't care much about is the piffle we put on TV these days. What they don't care about is boring, irrelevant, badly told stories, and what they really hate is the presumption that they are too stupid to know the difference."

Hear, hear to that. But as *New York Review* essayist Timothy Garton Ash points out in this new collection, Amanpour herself has been known to put one over on viewers—or so he believes. He recalled the Brandenburg Gate gathering last November for the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. This was a pale echo of the original historic moment, Garton Ash tells us, a media event drawing a "quite small and quite subdued" crowd. The main attraction was the large screens set up for the occasion, on which the people could watch themselves.

"They watch themselves watching themselves watching themselves watching themselves, in a kind of eternal iteration," he writes. "Of course, television itself does not tell you that this is what is happening. When I go to be interviewed by CNN, their monitors seem to be showing a large, celebrating crowd behind us. And when, in the course of the interview, I tell Christiane Amanpour that I think the Germans have a lot to celebrate, she gestures at the people behind us and says words to the effect of 'and so they are.' Thus does television create its own story."

Not to pick on Amanpour, whose work stands out for its intelligence and clarity, but everyone cuts corners from time to time, and that especially applies to foreign news coverage. The Mobius strip of people watching themselves


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watching themselves has a lot in common, actually, with journalism as it is all too often practiced—the smallest bits of information or insight being recycled again and again.

Declining foreign-news budgets mean that outside of *The New York Times* and a handful of other top papers, little serious foreign reporting or analysis gets undertaken. Serious foreign-policy specialists who both travel regularly and write for newspapers in the tradition of Walter Lippmann are almost an endangered species. That's not to say there are not skilled journalists covering foreign topics. Thomas Friedman, for example, writes deftly on foreign affairs for the *Times*, but has grown so enamored of globalism he has little time for writing that does not focus on economics.

**HISTORY OF THE PRESENT: Essays, Sketches, and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s**
*by Timothy Garton Ash*
Random House, $29.95

*The Washington Post* has Jim Hoagland, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, writing two columns a week. Hoagland did his time as a foreign correspondent and has credibility and insight. But most of his columns are written from a distance. Of the 99 he wrote over the 12 months ending in September, only 16 had foreign datelines. Inevitably, something is lost.

If Lippmann has any heir as both an original thinker and a restless traveler, it would have to be Garton Ash, a fellow at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and at the Hoover Institution. He argues, in the introduction to his new collection of essays, for the importance of the middle ground between scholarship and journalism. George Kennan dubbed Garton Ash's approach to writing "history of the present," and Garton Ash accepts the term—taking aim at the academic bias against real-world experience.

"As the formidably learned German intellectual historian Reinhart Koselleck has observed, from the time of Thucydides until well into the 18th century, to have been an eyewitness to the events described or, even better, to have been a participant in them was considered a major advantage for a writer of history." Of the recent notion that distance makes for better understanding, Garton Ash writes "this is actually a very odd idea: that the person who wasn't there knows better than the person who was."

He praises the thoroughness of many academic writers, and adds: "But they can also spend a life describing war without ever seeing a shot fired in anger."

Garton Ash has seen his share of such shots. Just as important, his industrious research over the years—and the stature he has gained—means he knows the people involved. While people like Vaclav Hável and Mikhail Gorbachev do not just know Garton Ash personally, they know his arguments and his sensibilities. As he tells us, Hável once gave a speech in Tokyo in which he repeatedly mentioned his "English friend," and took issue with Garton Ash's views on the need for intellectuals who become politicians to make a choice between one role and the other.

Unlike most journalists, Garton Ash has done the reading; he's done his homework, and, more often than not, he speaks the language. Unlike most historians, he writes with an immediacy and pungency that can be very effective, even memorable. Gushed Jan T. Gross in the *New York Times Book Review* a decade ago: "And how he writes! Over the years the author befriended members of dissident intellectual elites in East Central Europe. He traveled there frequently, had innumerable conversations and kept writing. I do not know of anybody who has learned these countries as well as he has."

When Garton Ash writes, in a 1998 piece on Germany, that "Boredom is an underrated factor in politics," many readers will not only shake their heads in agreement and smile—but also do their best to remember the line so they can cite it (or steal it). In 1990 he defended East Germans from the charge of Western intellectuals that they should vote differently and not support the former communists in such numbers. "Why the hell should they?" he wrote. "If you want to make another experiment, kindly perform it on yourself."

This is Garton Ash at his best, writing with both empathy and hard-won understanding, knowing the people and what they are really talking about, not just during television interviews. He's careful with facts, and maybe even more careful with ideas. He is, in short, someone whose approach and sensibility are completely at odds with all current trends in American journalism.

STEVE KETTMANN *is an American journalist living in Berlin.*

# Exile Blues

**By Susan Buzzelli**

NAMES LIKE FEUCHTWANGER, Werfel, and Seghers probably won't ring many bells today, but in the 1930s and '40s a long list of German playwrights, poets, and novelists were household names in America: Not just Thomas Mann, Nobel Prize-winning author of *Magic Mountain*, and Bertolt Brecht, librettist of *The Three Penny Opera*, endure today, but dozens of others who time has forgotten, including Anna Seghers, Franz Werfel, and Lion Feuchtwanger.

As the power of the Third Reich grew, the German, Czech, and Austrian intelligentsia, many of them Jews, cashed in on their celebrity for one-way tickets to the United States. Many others had to make a detour through Mexico. Americans welcomed these distinguished men and women with open arms; and Central Europe's finest minds returned the favor by lending their talents to movie studios, publishing houses, and Ivy League universities, while pledging their loyalty to the American way.

The exiles seemed to have found an ideal refuge from the madness of war. Far away from the threat of the Gestapo, they had the freedom to rally against Hitler, pursue their literary endeavors without fear of imprisonment, and launch campaigns to save their colleagues and loved ones still trapped in Europe. They also had the privilege of choosing either the palms, villas, and cushy Hollywood gigs of Los Angeles or the jazz clubs, uptown apartments, and lecture circuits of New York, where they were free to lead their eccentric European lifestyles in comfort. Erika Mann,


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for example, a resident of Los Angeles, was married to openly homosexual poet W.H. Auden, and there were rumors that she and her brother Klaus were lovers. Surrounded by friends and family, and free to follow their whims, the exiles continued to produce brilliant and important novels, essays, and plays.

Take a closer look, however, as Alexander Stephan, a professor of German at the University of Florida, does in his thought-provoking book *Communazis: FBI Surveillance of Émigré Writers*, and a very different picture of the émigré lifestyle emerges. Based on reams of government files that he obtained through the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, Stephan reveals that Herbert Hoover's FBI, along with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, House Un-American Committee, and Office of Strategic Services—the precursor to the CIA—expended an astonishing amount of time, effort, and manpower keeping a very close eye on the exiles. Every party they threw, every letter they wrote, and every phone call they made were subject to observation and analysis by dozens of agents—undercover or otherwise. They may have been free from the threat of physical harm, but they were not at all free from harassment and invasion of privacy.

**COMMUNAZIS**
**FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers**
*by Alexander Stephan*
Yale University Books, $29.95

From the moment the exiles set foot on Ellis Island, or, as writer Gustave Regler called it, "'a prison with iron bars' but 'without machine guns,'" agents subjected them to lengthy interviews full of embarrassing questions and tackled the task of gathering information about the minutiae of the writers' everyday lives. They used phone taps, bugs, mail interception, and old-fashioned stakeouts to find out how much money they owed their doctors, what time of day they bought groceries, how long they stopped for tea, and with whom they shared their beds. The agents scoured the writers' personal lives and rifled their dirty laundry in search of the slightest evidence of leftist leanings that they interpreted as grave threats to national security.

Many exiles did in fact flirt with communism and engage in political activities that warranted the scrutiny of government agents—an important point that Stephan glosses over in his book. Brecht, for example, who eventually fled to Eastern Germany, met regularly with Soviet diplomats and was a close friend of suspected atomic spy Gregory Kheifetz. There were also a handful of official Communist Party members among the exile community, including writers F.C. Weiskopf, Hans Marchwitza, and Ernst Bloch. Government agents, however, could do little more than accuse them of such "subversive activities" as praising Stalin and writing articles for the German exile magazine *Freies Deutschland*.

At times, Stephan's close analysis of the reports filed by these overzealous agents grows tedious. He spends too much time quoting the dry government files, and not enough time fleshing out the facts with background information. But many of the details Stephan includes about the writers' tumultuous lives make up for the choppy prose. There are mentions of Klaus Mann's liaison with a burly sailor, the mysterious suicide of Heinrich Mann's wife, and the steamy contents of adulterous love letters to Bertolt Brecht. Also interesting are examples of some of the foolish mistakes government agents made. One agent, monitoring a telephone conversation, confused the German word for greetings with the name of a possible political radical. Other agents accused Brecht of planting "some sort of secret message" in the Warner Brothers film version of *The Three Penny Opera*, a memory, like many others, that should not get blacked out of the United States' permanent record.

SUSAN BUZZELLI *is an intern at* The Washington Monthly.

# Cosmic Minutia

**By Christina Larson**

BACK IN 1939, WHEN PHILIP Hamburger was 25, he accepted a reporting job at *The New Yorker*—and for the past 61 years, he has made a distinguished living as a correspondent covering presidential inaugurations and banquets, national party conventions, and other ceremonies of state. The end product is *Matters of State: A Political Excursion*, 26 selections profiling such political giants as Dean Acheson, Fiorello LaGuardia, Joseph McCarthy, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton.

But don't let the title of this book fool you: Hamburger never sets forth to espouse political ideals or pass editorial judgments on the events he describes. In the foreword, he recounts the advice of Harold Ross, *The New Yorker*'s first editor, "Never go cosmic on me, Hamburger"—advice which Hamburger evidently still holds onto six decades later, for better or for worse.

At times, Hamburger's book can feel so uncosmic that it's a little like travel writing in a political landscape, with long catalogues of details about the weather of Washington and the pageantry of presidential inaugurations. But assuming you aren't reading for new insights into the mechanisms of the electoral process, you will appreciate what Hamburger's writing can give—that rare glimpse into the personal and idiosyncratic nature of the great leaders (and losers) of modern American politics.

**MATTERS OF STATE: A Political Excursion**
*by Philip Hamburger*
Counterpoint Press, $25.00

He describes Dewey on the morning after the disappointing election results have come in, and McCarthy weeping over a bit of sentimental poetry at dinner. He captures FDR's proud determination on the day of his first inauguration and LaGuardia's enthusiasm preparing for his live weekly radio


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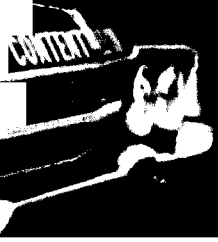


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broadcast. Hamburger writes with a sense of humor, describing the first Eisenhower inaugural ball as having "more hoop skirts than 'Gone With the Wind.'"

But, unfortunately, Hamburger rarely tackles contemporary (or controversial) political issues. Though he lends rhetoric in support of such grand ideological concepts as civic responsibility and free speech, these essays studiously avoid trumpeting specific policy changes or political alignments. The chapter on Nixon's second inaugural is the one piece in which Hamburger does take a clear editorial position. Incidentally, the 1973 manuscript was passed over at *The New Yorker* and collected dust in the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library, unpublished for 27 years.

That chapter opens with the weary proclamation that "the ceaseless war in Vietnam has not yet ceased." The specter of the war (and the author's nearly explicit opposition to it) resonates throughout the piece, from the meeting with Jerry Gordon, coordinator of the National Peace Action Coalition, to the description of Hamburger's stroll through Arlington Cemetery pondering a guide's prediction that "Arlington will be completely filled up by 1980."

If Hamburger was able to write such eloquent editorial commentary, why wasn't he encouraged to do it more often by his editors at *The New Yorker*? This reluctance—perhaps on the part of the magazine, perhaps on the part of the writer himself—to take stands on substantive current affairs is something which should give the serious reader pause.

More often than not, Hamburger handles potentially controversial subjects in an astoundingly noncontroversial manner. He steers clear away from political commentary, turning instead to descriptions of character or decorum. For example, Hamburger manages to describe how Supreme Court Justices Brandeis and Holmes each came to decisions without mentioning the decisions that they came to.

In a chapter about Dean Acheson, Hamburger observes, "Acheson's convictions are numerous and deep, but for the most part he naturally confines his official remarks as Secretary of State to clear expositions of established public policy." We get much the same impression of Hamburger the writer, confining his published remarks to accepted public opinion or *New Yorker* status quo.

That being said, Hamburger's writing amuses, surprises, delights, and like an elegant tabloid, depicts in bright colors the personalities that more cosmic writers treat only in black and white.

CHRISTINA LARSON *is an intern at* The Washington Monthly.

# The Grateful Fed

**By Merrill Goozner**

IN THIS AGE OF CELEBRITY, THE media was bound to give somebody credit for the current prosperity. Why not Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board? Presidential hopeful John McCain spouted the conventional wisdom during primary season. Not only would he reappoint Greenspan, but if he died, "I would do like they did in the movie 'Weekend at Bernie's.' I would prop him up and put a pair of dark glasses on him."

The "cult of Greenspan," as former *Fortune* magazine writer Justin Martin calls it in *Greenspan: The Man Behind Money*, is a worrisome development. With both political parties committed to balanced budgets and fiscal austerity, the nation's central bank, arbiter of monetary affairs, dictates economic policy by default.

Yet the Fed remains among the least accountable institutions in American politics. It makes decisions behind closed doors and communicates with terse statements. Liberal congressmen rail against the Fed's inflation-fighting bias, reminding anyone who will listen—no one at the Fed does—that monetary policy is supposed to promote low unemployment as well as low inflation. Former president George Bush still blames the Fed's slow response to the 1990-91 recession for his defeat in 1992.

But during Greenspan's long reign as Fed chairman, which began a few months before the 1987 stock market crash, the shroud of secrecy surrounding Fed deliberations has slipped a bit. In 1994, the powerful Open Market Committee began releasing its decisions on interest rates on the day they were made, and last year it began stating the Fed's bias about future moves. The minutes of those meetings are now issued within months and the transcripts are eventually made public.

With Republicans in charge of the key budget, banking, and taxing committees of Congress, oversight has given way to calling the chairman in for his studied opinions. Over the past 13 years, Greenspan has delivered an estimated 200 speeches and testimonies, a public record—admittedly much of it in jargon—that now comprises well over 3,500 pages.

This rich record will be of great interest to historians trying to evaluate the Fed's performance during the Greenspan years. He's overseen the longest economic expansion in the nation's history, accompanied by an unprecedented stock market boom. But Greenspan also presided over the savings and loan fiasco, one recession, one near-recession, and a series of currency and financial crises which threatened to undermine the entire global financial system.

Unfortunately, Martin chose to explore almost none of this record in this entertaining but ultimately disappointing biography. He was also handicapped by his inability to secure even a single interview with Greenspan. The result is a book that reads more like an extended magazine profile than a definitive biography. He read the clips. He talked to dozens of friends and acquaintances from more than three decades in Greenspan's public life. He delved into Greenspan's two-decade involvement in the cult surrounding free-market guru Ayn Rand. But the reader is left hungering for more—specifically, an evaluation of Greenspan's chairmanship.

Has he been lucky or has he been good? Has he been creative or has he simply followed long-standing rules for central bank conduct during crises? More importantly, what precedents has he set in the conduct of monetary policy that could help or hurt the nation in future crises? As Martin concludes, economic conditions can change in an instant and with them the Fed chairman's reputation. For the moment, we're stuck with the cult of Greenspan.

Nowhere are these failings more


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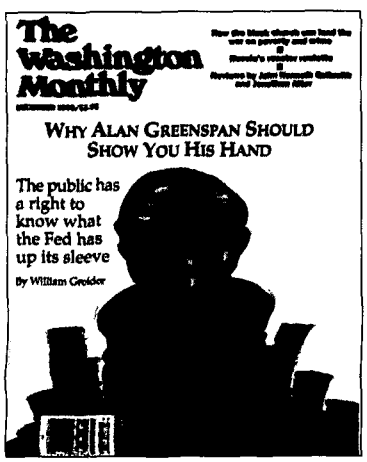


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evident than in Martin's discussion of Greenspan's decisions during the late summer and fall of 1998. Russia had defaulted on its debts and the Long Term Capital Management hedge fund neared collapse. The Fed organized a private sector rescue for LTCM and lowered interest rates three times within two months to restore investor confidence. "The crisis was successfully averted," Martin writes. "Greenspan's savvy handling of the Asian Contagion brought together skills accumulated during a half a century as an economist and thirty years on the public stage."

**GREENSPAN: The Man Behind Money**
*by Justin Martin*
Perseus Book Group, $28.00

It can be argued that it is not the Fed chairman's job to worry about the millions of Thais, Indonesians, and South Koreans who lost their savings and their jobs as a result of the "Asian Contagion." It can also be argued that bailing out the banks that foolishly lent unsecured cash to Nobel Prize-winning derivative traders was a necessary evil, even if it did create a "moral hazard." (Do bailouts encourage bankers and borrowers to ignore future credit risks because they know they'll be rescued from their mistakes?) Martin engages none of these questions. His standards are those of a day trader. "The boom just kept on booming, and for that Greenspan was about to receive considerable acclaim."

The bulk of the book is given over to a breezy recitation of Greenspan's life history, punctuated by occasional references to the author's core insight: Though an outspoken free-marketeer, Greenspan's public actions have been governed by pragmatism.

A few examples will suffice. Though an adviser to the Nixon campaign, Greenspan refused to join his friend Leonard Garment in the new administration. He watched Nixon impose wage and price controls and delink the dollar from gold, which flew in the face of everything Greenspan had thought and written to that point. Yet, with Watergate at a fever pitch, he accepted Nixon's invitation to become chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. He stayed on with President Ford, advising him to "whip inflation now" and raise government spending to end the recession that would eventually help dump the Republicans from power.

Reagan's election afforded Greenspan another chance at the brass ring of political power. While sympathetic to the supply-siders surrounding the new president, he was seen as one of Ford's guys and remained in New York with his consulting firm. When called two years later to chair the Social Security Commission during a real crisis (the deep recession had emptied the trust fund and the payroll tax was insufficient to meet payouts), Greenspan recommended tax increases and benefit cuts. It was hardly the supply-side approach.

Much has been made of Greenspan's initial test of fire after being appointed to run the Fed: the market crash of October 19, 1987. Greenspan opened the monetary spigots to insure liquidity. That's Central Banking 101. To do anything else would have been a tragic error.

Martin provides a useful guide to the few black marks on the Greenspan record. In the mid-1980s, his firm, Townsend-Greenspan, provided a clean bill of health for Charles Keating's Lincoln Savings and Loan. A few years later, the chairman of the Fed would serve on the board of Resolution Trust Corp., the company charged with cleaning up the thrift's mess. It was an embarrassing conflict of interest.

His record as an economic forecaster is dismal. He ranked dead last among his consultancy peers. His most famous stock market comment ("How do we know when irrational exuberance has unduly escalated asset values?") was uttered four years and 4,000 Dow Jones Industrial Average points ago.

Greenspan was late to recognize the impact of the New Economy and the upward shift in productivity rates that has enabled the rapid growth of the past half decade. He was late to recognize that unemployment could fall sharply lower without generating inflation.

Despite Greenspan's notoriety, there have only been a handful of books analyzing his career. Steven K. Beckner's *Back From the Brink* provides a mind-numbing recitation of decision-making in the first half of his tenure at the Fed. *The Greenspan Effect*, a recently published review of his speeches and writings by David B. Sicilia and Jeffrey L. Cruikshank, provides a useful compilation of his thinking.

Martin's book can now be added to the list as a popular introduction, but an authoratative evaluation of the Greenspan Fed remains to be written.

MERRILL GOOZNER *is a journalism professor at New York University.*


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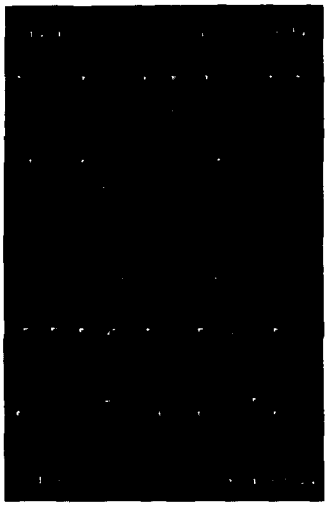

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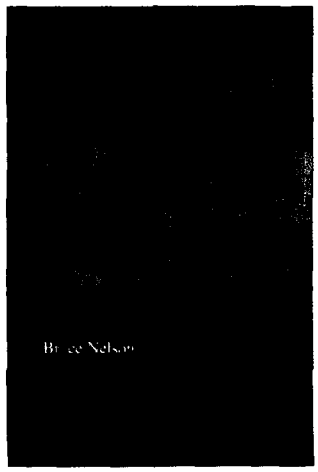

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